

The
Crooked Path
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with contributions by

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The Crooked Path Journal Issue 4

There is so much stuff that has to be crammed into the winter. Aside from all the holidays, visits from relatives, the drinking... There just seems to be a lot of stuff going on in life. This year especially, there is a lot of worry - for jobs, keeping a roof over our heads, keeping the family fed, and so on. But somehow, despite everything, I can't help feeling optimistic.

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Here in the US, we have a new President. Now, nobody knows how good he'll be, but we all hope he does a good job. And personally, I have high hopes that this year will see Pendraig blossom. We have some new authors lined up, and some new books from our existing authors, as well as a few interesting DVD projects. So it is going to be another busy year...

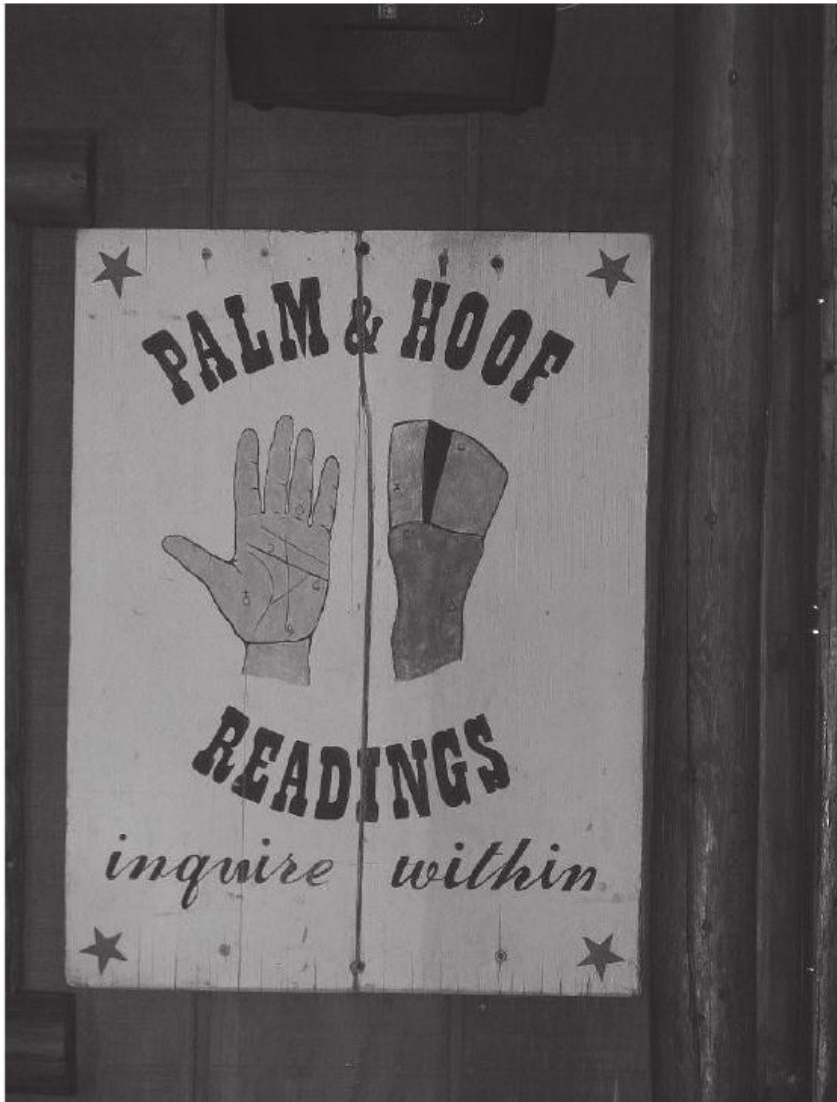
Magically speaking, it is going to be busy as well. We recently tried out an idea I've been wanting to play with for a long time, and it worked beautifully. Like many Traditional Witchcraft Covens, Briar Rose works to recover lost Lore, and it occurred to me that historically, one of the ways this was done was through storytelling. I'd already had some experience with automatic writing (the poetry in "The Book of the Veil" was written this way), so I tried tapping the bone along with automatic writing, and was able to pull a beautiful story about one of the entities we work with that has almost no surviving Lore. I heartily recommend it... give it a try!

This issue sees the debut of what I hope will be a regular Pagan travel column by Grace Victoria Swann. This time, she writes about New Mexico, but she travels all over the world, exploring sacred sites and discussing spiritual things with the local practitioners.

Bendith,
Peter

NORTHERN New Mexico: Land of Enchantment and MYSTERY

By Grace Victoria Swann



Sometimes places defy mere words. And it seems no matter how many times I visit New Mexico, I am always left speechless about something.

One mystery reveals itself and then another is uncovered, mesmerizing me further -- drawing me deeper into fascination with the places, people and culture.

New Mexico is a land of great obscurity. Secrets live in her soil and among her people. In the southern part of the state lies the City of Roswell, home of the infamous UFO crash and government cover-up. But, it is the northern parts of New Mexico -- Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, as well as the 19 Indian Pueblos -- that continually seduces me.

My senses come alive in these areas. The rush from change of altitude immediately begins altering one's body chemistry. At more than 7,000 feet above sea level in

some locale's the high elevations and mountain ranges create shifting colors in the sky -- from light pink and blue pastels to lavender, periwinkle, varying shades of magenta and purple, morphing into a deep, dark midnight blue as the sun sets. Peaks in the sky are nicely offset by the earth toned, flat roof architecture on a majority of commercial and residential buildings, clumped together in communities that separate the various Indian Reservations and lands protected from development.

During the cold weather months, the scent of fresh burning pinion branches wafts intoxicatingly through the air. Spicy burrito's ordered "Christmas" style (with a mixture native red and green chiles) dance in the mouth, making eyes water slightly with each delicious bite. And nothing tastes finer on the lips than a cup of Aztec Mexican inspired hot dark chocolate with ground red chili, sweetened with just a kiss of honey. (Using the correct ingredients and made just right, the chocolate *will* bring on flushing and mild hallucinations.)

With regards to my love for the state and it's myriad of offerings, I am amongst good company. British author D.H. Lawrence often referred to New Mexico as the "greatest experience from the outside world I have ever had"; and artist Georgia O'Keefe noted of her muse "the culture of people talks more in colors and shapes than in words". This is, I believe, witnessed at its richest during the flurry of activity taking place at various Pueblo Indian rituals.

While the first human inhabitants of the area date back some 12,000 years, the history of Southwest Pueblo peoples dates approximately two millennia. They built elaborate towns between A.D. 900 and 1300, and then during the 14th century migrated to the lush Rio Grande Valley to establish farming communities.

In 1540, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led a European expedition consisting of several hundred armed men and five Franciscan missionaries into Pueblo territory. The team traveled in search of gold and converts. Soon afterwards, the Pueblo Indians were declared Spanish subjects and forced into Catholicism. Civil and church authorities began confiscating Indian religious paraphernalia, burning ceremonial chambers (called kivas), and punishing Indians who didn't cooperate. Public whippings, head shavings and amputations of feet or hands meant that the Indians had to "adapt" to stay alive. Rituals that had been public displays of worship and communion were stifled as mission churches were erected.

By 1680, Pueblo resentment became so great that Indians united in a revolt against the Spaniards. The Spaniards returned 13 years later and re-established control, but their treatment of the Pueblo Indians was less harsh at this juncture. The Spaniards continued to rule, however, until

The city of Santa Fe, short for "The Royal City of St. Francis de Assisi" was founded in 1607, 13 years before pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. The church of New Mexico is one of pre-Vatican Catholicism. Certain times of the year, no matter what your faith, everyone becomes Catholic. The Church has a cultural and social importance that transcends doctrine and dogma.

The following are some of Santa Fe's most interesting Catholic attractions:

San Miguel Mission -- Build between 1610 and 1626, the Chapel of San Miguel is the oldest church in the United States. The original adobe walls are still largely intact, although the church has been rebuilt and repaired numerous times.

Loretto Chapel – This Gothic-style chapel was built in 1878 and patterned after Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. Rich in history and tradition, the Loretto Chapel is home to the "miraculous staircase," which makes two 360-degree turns, stands on its own weight without visible means of support, is made of an apparently extinct wood species, and was constructed with only square wooden pegs without glue or nails. The chapel, which still operates for weddings and special events, holds regular tours daily. During the tours, people can learn about the mysterious carpenter who showed up one day after the former resident nuns prayed to St. Joseph for an answer to their construction prayers.

Santuario de Guadalupe – Home of the treasured painting Our Lady of Guadalupe one of the largest and finest oil paintings of the Spanish Southwest, the Santuario de Guadalupe was built in 1781. The historic church is now an art and history museum, which contains many items including the Archdiocese of Santa Fe's collection of New Mexican santos (carved images of the saints), Italian Renaissance paintings, and Mexican baroque paintings.

1821 when an independent Mexican government took control. Almost three decades after that, the area became a territory of the United States.

New Mexican food guru, culture expert and media personality, Rocky Durham with the Santa Fe School of Cooking, noted that during attempts of conquest the Spaniards had a difficult time adapting to the desert climate, lack of rainfall and strange vegetation.

While they weakened, the Indians strengthened; reason being had to do with lack of food.

The three sisters (corn, squash and beans), Native American food staples, were not part of the Spanish diet. "Corn, in particular, was viewed as an implement of magic and witchcraft," he said.

To retain nutrients and be able to digest corn properly, the Indians burned leaves and stems from bean plants and then combined the ashes with corn, thus adding to the mystique and suspicion.

Growing, preparation and consumption of corn as food also took ceremonious teamwork. Praise and morning offering to the eastern sun, planting by the moon and signs such as snow melting in certain areas of the landscape, as well as dances to summon rain were part of this effort. Indians also seemed to use corn pollen and cornmeal in a similar way that the Catholics used Holy Water -- for blessing and purification.

Durham reports that a major turning point in Spanish/Indian conflict came when members of the Spanish army began to turn against one another. "They began fighting over which one of them was going to get to consume a spider," he laughed, ironically. Desperate for nourishment, some of the Spanish broke down and gave the corn a try. (Better to die from the sword for heresy than starvation, I suppose.)

Having lived through ingesting corn with no side effects, the Spanish Catholics declared corn, indeed, as nourishment.

Durham, an Anglo whose family has Navajo Indian ties, explained that due to the precarious history and a belief that "the concepts of magic [and healing arts] with Pueblo Indians is finite, not infinite," it is quite difficult for outsiders to learn about the culture and practices of Pueblo Indians. During my recent travels I was stonewalled often, even at various tourist attractions, when I asked specific questions about intention, methodology and practices. At the Pueblos themselves, tourist behavior at many locales is kept in check with the charging of admissions fees for entry. Additional monies are required to carry a camera or any recording equipment onto reservation land. Recording devices are completely forbidden during public religious ceremonies. Photographing any Pueblo person is forbidden also, without first asking permission and secondly, paying whatever fee the person requires. This of course, keeps down on the number of outsiders collecting and distributing images of sacred symbols, learning chants, and having the ability to attempt to replicate the behaviors elsewhere.

"If someone of a particular tribe shares their initiatory secrets, then it taps on the finite source,"

Durham explained. "If you share what you have learned then it drains on the resource even further... eventually there will be nothing left for their people."

Considering most other religious groups believe "the divine" is infinite, I found this perspective most interesting. In asking around a little further, a member of one of the tribes mildly confirmed Durham's assessment, also adding "There is no way to explain beliefs or practices. It can only be experienced."

Oral communication from generation to generation remains tradition with the Pueblo peoples. Cultural anthropologists have made a decent stab at study and documentation through scholastic journals with attempting to categorize and unravel the mysteries, but I have found the information one-dimensional in comparison to the first hand incident of attending a Pueblo ritual.

As a writer, my issue with all of this is that by the time I trek back to the car after a ceremony, I can only recall a mere fraction of the colors, scents, sounds, attire or formation of ritual structure, dance and presentation. There's nothing to report on that makes any sense at this point. I'm only left with the fragments and having been moved by the experience. Moved so much to the point that I can barely speak a complete sentence about it. My eyes just get wide and my brain gives me a snapshot memory of costumed dancers circling, the sound of rattles, beat of drums and haze from the smoke of massive bonfires.

"Even if something is in the public domain does not mean it is okay to write about," Joyce Begay-Foss, Educational Director at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, said. Cultural sensitivity and sacred site protection are just two of the issues at stake. Begay-Foss, a Navajo who worked with all the 22 tribes in the 19 pueblos, documenting history for education purposes denotes that even at the government agency level there is respect for tribal privacy.

"Each Pueblo has it's own language. The customs and ceremonies belong to the people. It's something we protect and take care of," she said. Begay-Foss shared that although she is responsible for educating others, she personally has not visited many of the sacred sites of the various Pueblos because doing so falls "outside tradition" of her people.

For visitors interested in experiencing sites and ruins not often frequented by tourists, Begay-Foss suggests taking place in the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture's Adventures in Archeology program. "Some of the places you cannot access on your own because they are on private land," she noted. "Being with a group of people, which includes an educated guide, one gets a condensed history and can ask questions." Asking questions is frowned upon during normal Pueblo tours and while attending Public rituals.

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque acts as central communications point for information about pueblo activities, including history, storytelling, traditions, arts, dances and Feast Days. Some rites are closed to visitors, such as the "coming of age ceremony" or some of the agricultural ceremonies at the more conservative Pueblos, such as the Santo Domingo or Zuni.

According to the cultural center Web site, “the Franciscan fathers who missionized New Mexico... named each pueblo for a different Catholic saint. It is believed that each of the patron saints was likely chosen for any of several reasons, including proximity to a specific date, the patron or devotion of the founder of the mission or the Franciscan friar, or the usurpation of a pueblo ceremony.”

Feast days dedicated to the saints are historically the most open and friendly times for one to visit a pueblo and mingle with its people. Pueblo residents believe that the role of the spectator and of the ritual participants are equally as important during these times of festivity.

At Taos, the largest of the pueblo communities, San Geronimo Day is celebrated with early morning footraces staged in front of the northern adobe room block, with Taos Mountain in the background. Colorfully dressed women and children gather on the flat rooftops, while men trill cries at the runners to spur them on. Males chosen to race divide into two groups for a relay. They are donned in breech clothes, body paint, honor feathers and ribbons. Rewarded for their efforts, candy and other treats are thrown at them from spectators on the rooftops and along the earthen raceway path. Later in the afternoon, sacred clowns called *chi-pu-nah* (or *koshares*) appear and play tricks among the crowd. They then gather around and attempt to climb a smooth, tall tree pole that has been erected in the center of the plaza. Eventually, one clown makes it to the top and is rewarded with a loaf of bread, canteen of water and a sheep. Pueblo visitors at the event may also shop for items such as jewelry and pottery and dine on *horno* bread or tacos.

One of the oldest pueblo sites is the Acoma pueblo, which sits atop a 357-foot high mesa. Acoma is also called Sky City. At one of their events, deer dancers dress in white knit kilts and deer antler headdresses. They wind their way through centuries old adobe home paths to a plaza where crowds gather to watch them. The wide open space in the distance at the edge of the mesa make it appear as though the dances are taking place on the edge of the world.

Towering *kachina* figures (deities of a specific realm) emerge from the darkness and enter into the village in a ceremonial welcome during *Shalako*, a new year's ritual at the Zuni Pueblo, which takes place in late November or early December each year. The *kachina*'s enter a specially prepared house decorated inside with stuffed deer and elk heads, which have been adorned with necklaces of turquoise and silver. Part of the ritual also includes elders singing the entire history of the Zuni people.

Santa Domingo's corn dance features hundreds of dancers moving in unison, the soaring sound of men's voices in choral song, and drums beating a mesmerizing rhythm.

For centuries dances honoring animals and mystical beings intertwine with rituals honoring the agricultural cycle on the pueblos. The warm weather months honor agriculture. The cold weather months, the hunt and animals such as deer, elk and buffalo that have laid down their lives to feed the pueblo people.

Avoiding religious persecution, many rituals were only performed in private for years. But according

to the book “Dances of the Tewa Pueblo Indians” by Jill D. Sweet, in the late 1950s, the community of Santa Clara stepped out boldly and proudly with the creation of more public ceremonials in an effort to unite the past and promote cultural pride. The event created, called the Puye Cliffs ceremonial, has not, however, been held since 1981. The show that year tragically ended when lightning struck and killed two Indian women. The incident was interpreted as a supernatural warning that the event should no longer be held and, thus, it was discontinued.

Visiting the pueblos it is ironic to see the inclusion of Catholicism in pueblo ritual and custom, considering the turbulence that once existed. A majority of pueblo residents now practice both their ancestors’ as well as Catholic traditions. At St. Jerome Chapel located within the Taos Pueblo – recognized as one of the most significant historical cultural landmarks in the world by the World Heritage Society -- a large statue of the Virgin Mary represents both the mother of Christ and the mother of Earth, responsible for all creation.

Rituals change out from year to year at the pueblos, beckoning visitors back time and again for more experiences, more wonder and more mystery.

For more information & plan your trip, visit:

Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau
www.itsatrip.org

Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
www.indianpueblo.org

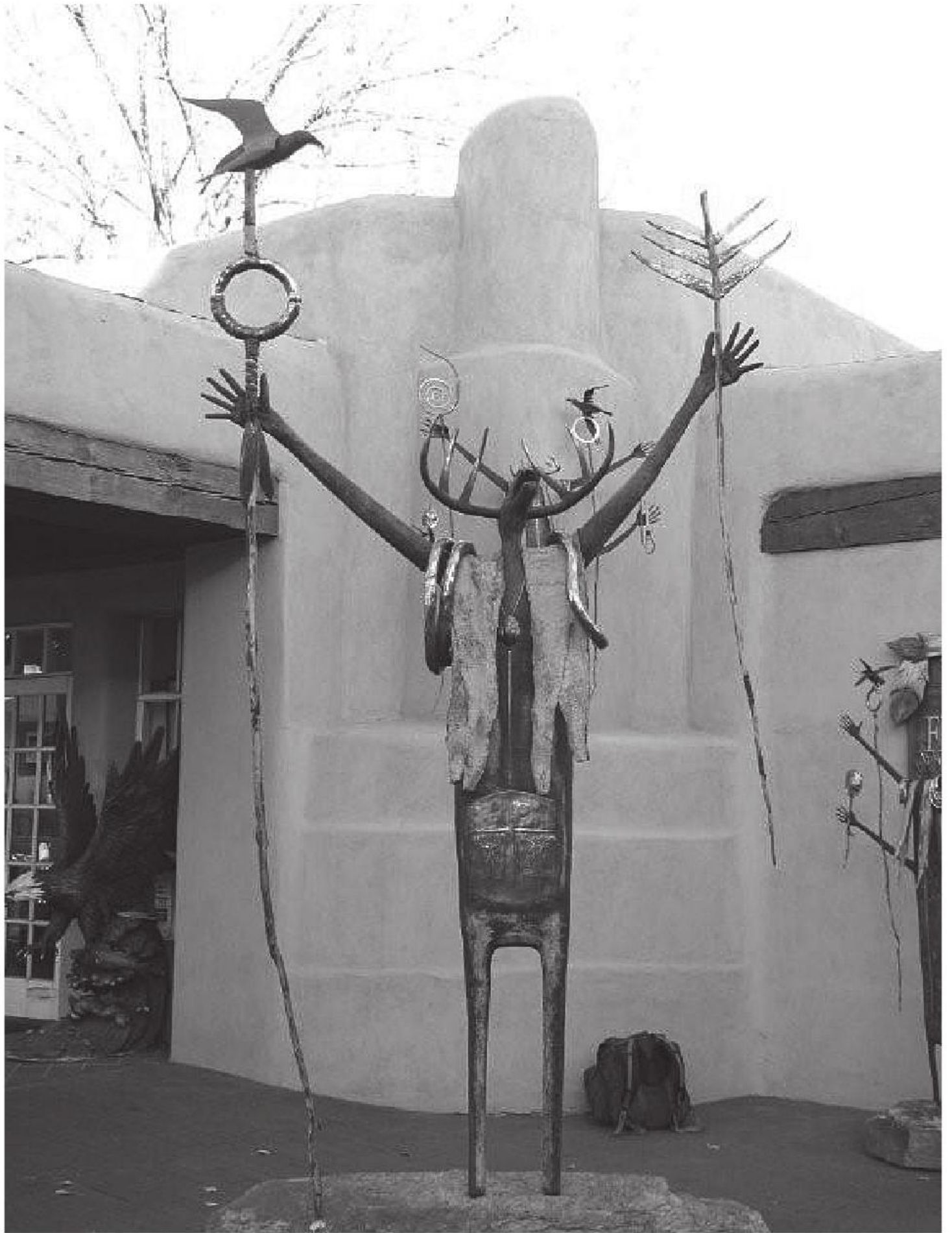
Features links to the 19 New Mexico Pueblos: Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San File, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, Zuni

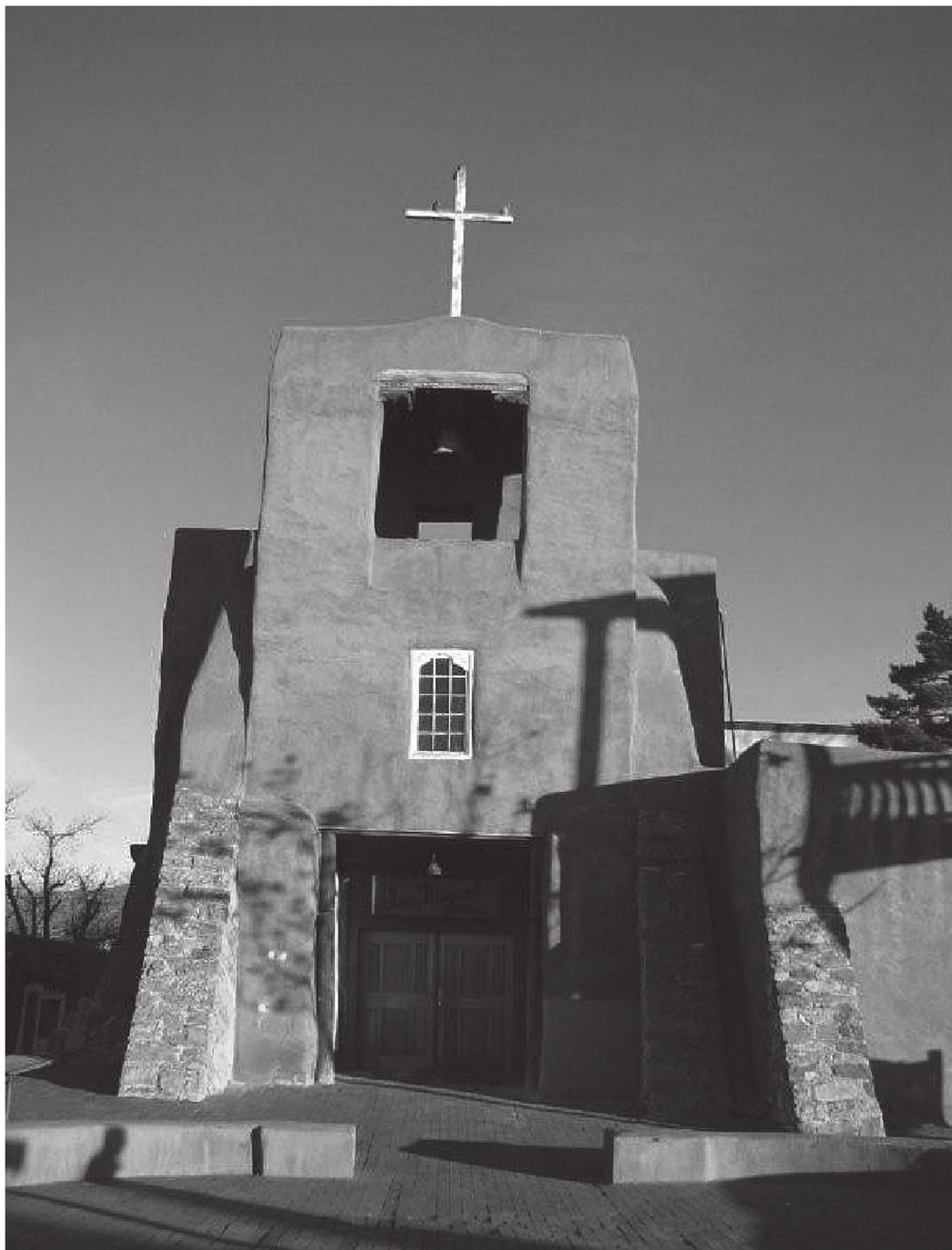
Santa Fe School of Cooking
www.santafeschoolofcooking.com

Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau
www.santafe.org

Taos Chamber of Commerce
www.taoschamber.com



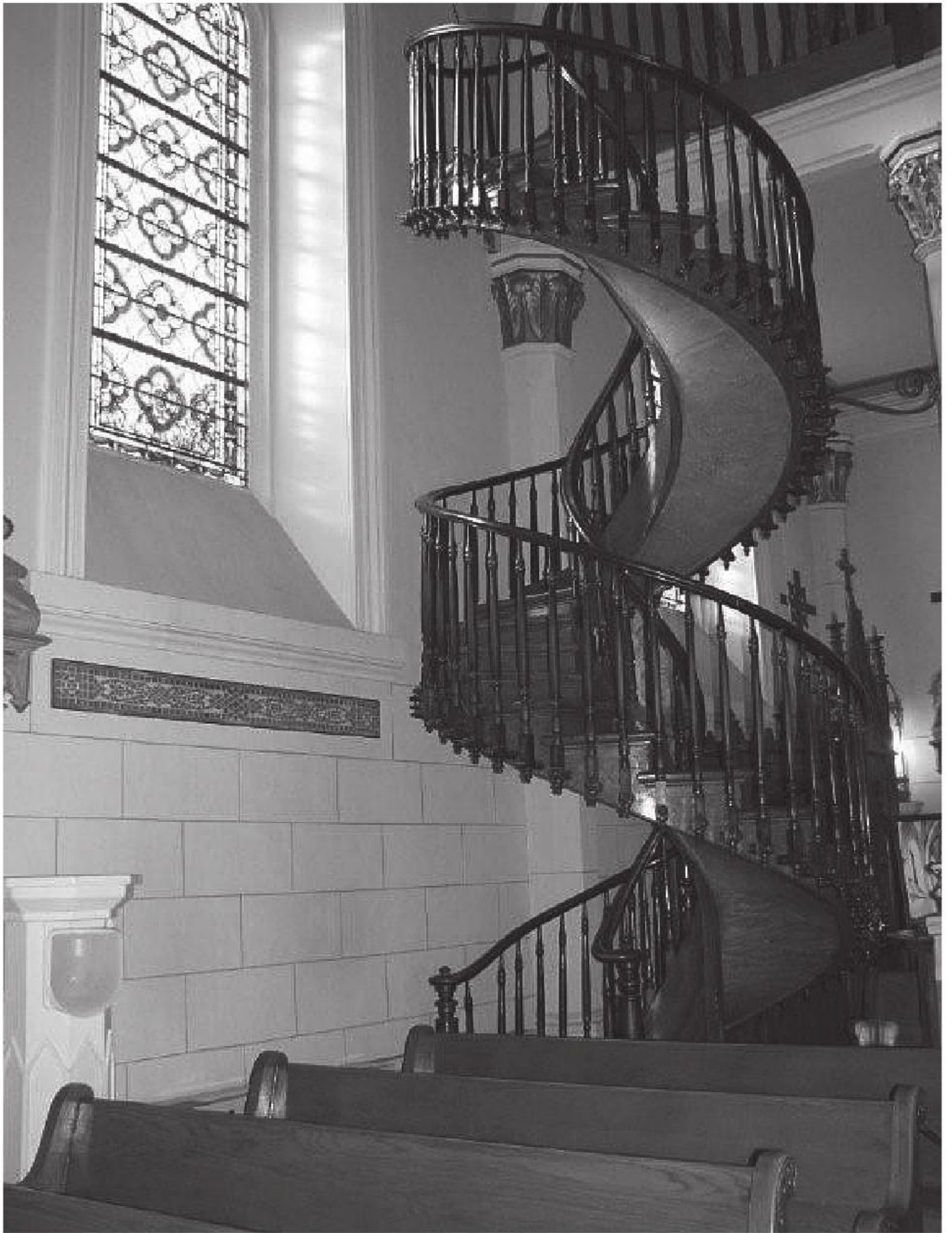




Oldest church in the U.S. - built in 1610



Inside oldest church. Behind altar





This page...

Rocky Durham at Santa Fe School of Cooking is one of Santa Fe's most open and knowledgeable sources of Native American historical and mythical lore.

At one time in history, possession of even a kernel of corn (an implement of magick) constituted heresy. The sentence for such a crime? Death.

Opposite page...

Legendary staircase built by an unknown carpenter, using unknown wood (according to scientific studies), using no nails - at the Loretto Chapel.

Mysterious haunted activities at the Chapel include: frequent visits by the masculine featured, kind hearted nun Sister George (long deceased); occasional handprints of children appearing mysteriously more than 8 feet above ground (in a restricted area); and the sounds of laughter and hymns being sung - when the chapel is unoccupied.



This page...

Eagle Dancers on Corn Mountain: The Eagle dance is a traditional dance of many American Indian tribes.

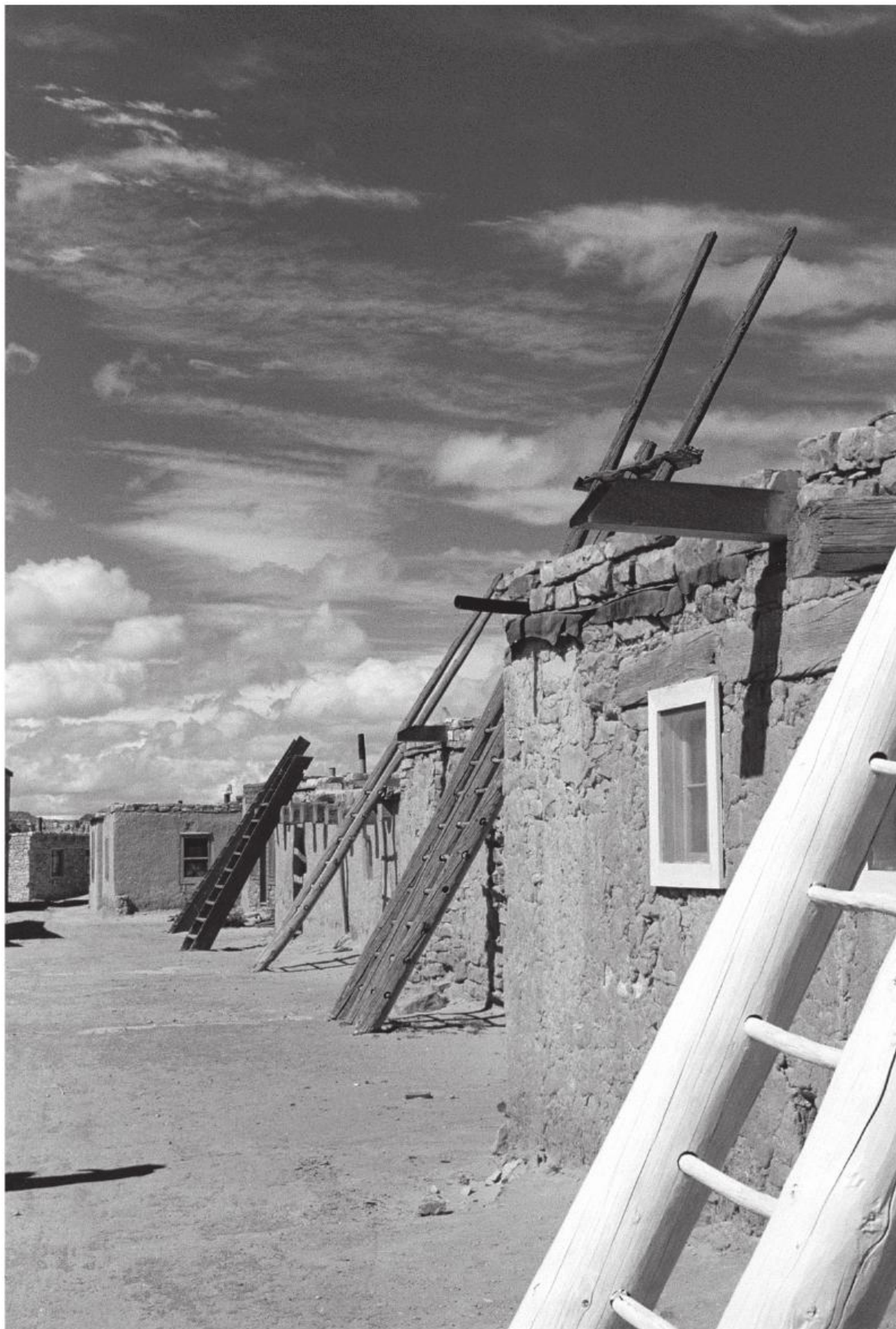
Photograph by Ron Behrmann

Facing page...

Zuni Olla Maiden dancers balance ceramic pots on their heads

Credit: MarbleStreetStudio.com





*Known as Sky City, Acoma Pueblo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the country
Credit: Lynn Baker*

In Search of Watto

Steven Posch

The London occult community of the late 50s and early 60s was rife with intellectual ferment and creative experimentation, frequently masquerading as Ye Most Ancient Tradition. Modern pagan witchcraft, then in its second generation, was an important component in this seething cauldron of cultural creativity, and much old witch-lore—or new lore presented as old—came bubbling to the surface. One particularly tasty morsel in this cultural stew was a mysterious name for the god of the witches: Watto.

I myself recently rediscovered Watto while rereading early issues of Elizabeth Pepper and John Wilcock's seminal American annual, *The Witches' Almanac*. There, in a lyrical essay entitled "The Old Ways," Paul Huson wrote of the god and goddess of the witches:

To many of us, they are just the Lord and the Lady. Whether we care to call them Hu and Ceridwen, Bel and Ioevohe, Pan and Diana, Lucifer and Aradia, Watto and Andred...the archetypes are the same (Huson 6).

The name "Watto" rang familiarly on my ear, doubtless from my (unremembered) first reading of the article decades before. I was struck by the word's mysterious, "witchy" quality; final O notwithstanding, it had the ring of an authentic folk name. Unlike many supposedly traditional god-names, which tend to sound "channeled" or exotic—"Karnayna" and "Zarak," for instance—"Watto" has an easy familiarity and unpretentious quality to it, not to mention a genuinely archaic sound. (Remember Wat Tyler's Rebellion?) It both "reads" and "hears" as natively English. It is a name that one could well imagine having been whispered, lip to ear, down a long line of unschooled village witches, century on century.

I wrote to Paul Huson to ask where he had learned the name and what he knew about it. He identified the London occult scene of the late 1950s or early 1960s as his source. He noted that at the time it stuck in his memory as "wonderfully odd," but could no longer specifically recall how he had learned the name or from whom. Nor did he know the origin of the word; he suggested (at a guess) a possible connection with yet another name for the witches' god: Atho (Huson, personal communication: March 29, 2007).

"Atho" was of course the name given (also in the 1960s) to Ray Howard's (in)famous disappearing carved wooden head representing "the Horned God of Witchcraft." (For more on this fascinating chapter in the history of modern witchery, see Seims 4ff). Doreen Valiente interprets Atho—on precisely what basis is unclear—as an anglicized form of a supposed "Old Welsh" *Arddhu*, which she translates as "The Dark One" (Valiente 144). (Presumably, this would be *Yr Ddu*, "The Black [One]" in modern Welsh.) Given the tendency of initial W to come and go in dialectal English (cp. the comparable Dorsetshire term *ooser* with its alternate variant *wooser*), Huson's suggestion seems not unreasonable.

On further reflection, however, I would like to propose another possible (if, admittedly, conjectural) etymology for our elusive “Watto,” one which will take us far afield in the realms of mythology and protohistory, and ultimately lead us to the very heart of the witches’ god.

I would suggest that our search for the witch-god as he was known (to some at least) in mid-20th century London actually begins some 5000 years ago on the Central Asian steppes among the semi-nomadic tribes that spoke the related dialects that have come to be known as Proto-Indo-European. This proto-language and its vocabulary, though unrecorded in writing, is (within limits) reconstructable because its daughter-languages were ancestral to virtually all modern European (and some Asian) languages.

Proto-Indo-European was a language rich in terminology for spiritual experience. (On the potentials—and perils—of reconstructing a vanished worldview, see Mallory 1989.) Among this vocabulary was the root-word **wāt-*. (The masculine singular form would be **wāt[t]os*.) I would propose that our search for Watto begins here.

The reader will gain something of an understanding of the semantic field encompassed by the term **wāt-* if we examine its descendants. Latin *vātēs* (whence “vaticination”) meant “poet, prophet,” and Irish *fáidh* “prophet, bard.” It was a particularly productive root among the Germanic languages. Proto-Germanic **wōdaz* (“rage, madness, fury”) gave rise to Gothic *wōds*, Dutch *woede*, German *Wut*, and Icelandic *óðr*. The Old English form was *wōd*, “mad, raging, furious.” This survived in early Modern English as *wood* (“mad, frantic, furious, angry, enraged, raging”), and Scots as *wuid* (*wude*, et al.). Related homonyms are the Old English *wōd*, “voice, song,” and Icelandic *óðr*, “song, poetry, mind, wit.” PIE **wāt-* would thus seem to have meant something like “trance, madness, inspiration, ecstasy”; what these days one might call a “non-ordinary” (or “shamanic”) state of consciousness.

If I may be permitted a digression at this point: the attributive infix **-no-* is common to many Indo-European languages; attached to the name of a group or category of beings, it denotes the “focal member” of said group. In Latin, the head of the *domus* (“house, household, family”) is the *dominus* (“lord, owner, master”); the leader of a *tribus* (“tribe”) is the *tribunus* (“tribune”). Among the Anglo-Saxons, the leader of the *dryht* (“people, army, multitude”) was the *dryhten* (“king, leader, lord”); in Proto-Germanic this would have been **teutas/teuta-no-s*. *Cernunnos*, to take a Gaulish example, is thus not merely the “horned (one)” *toute simple* (“horn” would have been **cernos*), but rather the “preeminently horned one” or “leader of the horned” (Lincoln 196n5, although he does not cite this particular example).

In combination with the root in question, this infix yielded Proto-Germanic **wōd-eno-* and **wōd-ono-*, which in turn gave rise variously to English Woden, German Wotan, and Icelandic Óðinn. The Germanic Allfather was, of course, a god known preeminently for his shamanic, consciousness-altering capabilities. *Wodan id est furor*, as Adam of Bremen wrote in the 11th century: “Wodan, that is to say, madness.”

In conclusion, I would suggest that Watto is the name given to the god of witches in his person as shaman-in-chief, he who in the beginning first pioneered “archaic techniques of ecstasy” and taught them to his children. He is both the ecstatic and *ecstasis* itself. (For a fascinating study of the neurophysiology of ecstatic states and their relation to Paleolithic art and religion, see Lewis-Williams 2002.)

Am I suggesting that the name Watto has come down to us in direct, unbroken lineage from Ye Most Ancient Pagan Times? In the absence of any documentary evidence, I fear this would be a claim of desperation. My best guess would be that in that fiercely bubbling cauldron of creativity that was occult London in the 50s and 60s, someone stumbled across a list of Indo-European roots and, in the grand manner of the ancestors, was filled with the seething, expansive, creative spirit of *wōd*.

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The Black Goddess

Ann Finnin

“She is Fate, the Creatress and the Destroyer. You will understand why She destroys, but the destruction will bring its own sorrow ... and that sorrow is perhaps Her greatest gift to the moon-struck poet.”

Robert Cochran

Many newcomers to our tradition have often asked why our Mother Goddess is two-fold (Light and Dark) rather than three-fold (Maiden-Mother-Crone) as in most Wicca traditions. The answer to that question lies at the basis of what makes the Roebuck a mystery tradition rather than a fertility one. The concept of a three-fold goddess relates primarily to a woman's fertility cycle, youth-beauty, maturity-maternity, age-wisdom. However, in traditions more concerned with wisdom rather than fertility, you find the Goddess's three-fold fertility aspects downplayed and her two-fold wisdom aspects emphasized.

Caitlin Mathews calls this Goddess of Wisdom “Sophia” after the patron saint of the Gnostics and describes Her aspects as two-fold, light and dark. Poet Robert Graves discusses Her bright aspect at length in *The White Goddess*. Called Maya by the Hindu, she is described as a goddess of love, passion, artistic inspiration and a variety of other things that come under the mantle of illusion. Onto her is projected all of human desire. However, Graves also describes her “dark sister,” the Black Goddess in an essay of that name “whose temples were small and unthronged.” “She promises a new pacific bond between men and women, corresponding to a final reality of love, in which the patriarchal marriage bond will bade away.”

Graves has come under severe criticism recently from feminist writers who claim that his is a particularly male point of view and has little to do with how the Goddess relates to women. And, that is true for the most part. Men do not share in the biologically-based fertility cycles of women and are, for the most part, more concerned about the role of the Goddess in inspiring creative desire, both sexual and artistic. This stands to reason. Gender roles, and the divine archetypes that have been developed to represent them, relate to having and raising children and men and women serve different functions in that process. However, the lure of the White Goddess as creative muse is just as strong for those women who devote their lives to the arts, the sciences, philosophy or mysticism as it is for their male counterparts.

That is why a mystery tradition devoted to the Goddess of Wisdom transcends gender roles. It deals with the development of the individual, rather than the continuation of the species and therefore works for both sexes equally. Men and women who choose to explore options other than raising a family tend to face the same problems and challenges with what Carl Jung calls their Process of Individuation, that is, the development of their individuality regardless of their gender. This is certainly not to imply that there is anything necessarily wrong with breeding. For most people, this satisfies them emotionally and spiritually and they need no more. However, throughout human

history, there have been those men and women who long for something over and above just raising babies. And it is for them that mystery schools were created.

Both Graves and Matthews emphasize the fact that the two aspects of the Goddess of Wisdom, white and black, are both necessary to understanding the concept of wisdom itself. The White Lady personifies That Which We Desire; The Black Lady, That Which Is. The White Lady shows us the kinds of beautiful things that are possible in this world and the Black Lady shows us how to bring those beautiful things into manifestation. Neither is complete without the other. However, the exquisite beauty of what could be often pales against the often decidedly unbeautiful steps that need to be taken to make them real. That is why too many people prefer to keep the White Lady up on her pedestal than to do the work necessary in order to have Her walk beside them.

Think of the Black Lady as the Guardian of the Portal to the world of manifestation. She is, if you wish, a personification of what has often been called Natural Law or the Laws of Nature -- unbreakable and implacable rules and regulations which govern the material universe. These Natural Laws are numerous (gravity, for example). However, for our purposes, let us focus on the one which causes so much trouble in the realm of human behavior, that of the law of cause and effect. This law states that any behavior, including the behavior of avoidance of action, produces a result or a consequence.

This law has been described by many different cultures and many different ways. "That which you sow, so shall you reap;" "What goes around, comes around;" "Aint no such thing as a free lunch;" "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" and so on. This is not necessarily a linear process. Like a cue ball smashing into a rack of billiard balls, sending them in all directions, an action can produce a myriad of consequences which, in turn, serve as actions causing other consequences in an exponential fashion. The physical and emotional effects of these actions and reactions are governed by certain immutable physical and psychological principles.

Does this mean that we are but slaves to Natural Law? Not necessarily. Mystery traditions have taught throughout the ages that humans have the ability to bring their actions, physical and emotional, under the control of their will, if they want to badly enough. We can refuse to act in a given situation according to the dictates of the physical body or, if the situation calls for it, act in direct defiance of the needs of the body. The natural consequences of such actions follow, of course. The physical body suffers damage and even death. Still, if the human will desires the outcome enough, it will accept the lesser consequences in hopes of achieving the greater. Human will is a powerful force in the physical universe, but ultimately, it is fueled by human desire and therein lie the problems.

We have the unique ability to manufacture our view of the world from the input of our senses to fit into that which we desire. If we are honest with ourselves about our desires, then our actions will produce the results we want. If we delude ourselves about what we desire, perhaps to appear noble rather than greedy, for example, we get far different results than we expected and we suffer for it. The problem isn't with Natural Law, it is with the delusion that we have manufactured. Natural Law gives us what we really want, not what we think we want. Get rid of the delusion, see the cause and

effect chain for what it really is and the problems resolve themselves. However, the price for this realization is that we must give up the pretty, pristine, nice, clean illusion for the often nasty, dirty, painful and ugly reality. There is no other way. So, the majority of humans choose the delusion and accept, more or less cheerfully, the problems that go with it.

There is a card in the tarot deck called the Wheel of Fortune (also the Wheel of Karma or Destiny). When this card comes up in a reading it usually indicates that the querant is suffering the same problems over and over, life after life, and can't seem to get out of their often painful "rut." An example of this might be a woman born into a family with an alcoholic father who marries one alcoholic husband after another. Therefore, her "fate" seems to be that she is destined to take care of an alcoholic man for the rest of her life. But is she doomed forever to this destiny? Only if she maintains the worldview that her noble purpose in life is to devote her entire energies to rescuing unhappy men. The delusion here is that people will love you if you allow them to feed off of you. This is an inaccurate view of how the world works. As long as this woman maintains this clash with Natural Law, she will continue to wonder why her selfless sacrifice does not result in the love she craves.

The really sad thing is that, as researchers into past life regressions have discovered, such world views don't disintegrate at physical death but are passed on from lifetime to lifetime and, unless a concerted effort is made to alter that view, around and around the person goes on the Wheel forever acting out the same old script. People don't automatically "wise up." If they are not jolted by force into another worldview, they will continue to follow the same comfortable pattern, causing themselves misery and frustration time after time, thereby maintaining the reputation of the physical world as a "veil of tears" that one must somehow "escape."

So, why do people keep going around and around on the Wheel of Fortune making themselves and other people miserable rather than get off and shed their problems? Good question.

1. Some people think Natural Law doesn't (or shouldn't) apply to them. They feel that they should have the right to be able to have whatever personal gratification they want, when they want it, without paying the cost of that gratification. Since the universe refuses to cooperate with them, they become adept at avoiding the consequences of their actions by finding people who will take the consequences, or at least accept the blame, for them. Addicts and abusers do this all the time, and it works for awhile -- sometimes, several lifetimes -- so long as there is a steady supply of people who will perform this function. But eventually, Natural Law will demand payment in full. Like the Gas Company, the Black Goddess will eventually shut off your service if you avoid paying your bill for too long.
2. Others think that some actions should always have pleasant consequences ("rewards") and others should always have unpleasant consequences ("punishments"). These are the people who think that if they are "good" (arbitrarily defined by some cultural or religious authority), then pleasant things should always result. When unpleasant things happen to them, they wonder what they've done "bad." The sad truth that these people have to face is that every

action results in a combination of both pleasant and unpleasant consequences, both for them and for others. There is nearly always a trade-off involved between one's own individual goals and the welfare of one's society since what benefits one does not necessarily benefit the other.

The Black Lady is always there to help, should help be asked. However, shedding several lifetimes of inaccurate illusions is not easy and often the cure is worse than the disease -- for awhile. Take the case of a woman who has a handsome, successful husband, two smart and active teenagers, a high-powered career with a prosperous company and a beautiful home in the suburbs. She has everything she wants on the physical realm, so she decides that now she wants to "grow spiritually." The Black Lady hears her sincere petition and takes her at her word. All of a sudden, her life comes apart at the seams. Her husband runs off to Tahiti with his secretary using the money he withheld from the IRS, her daughter gets pregnant and her son gets arrested for drug possession, she loses her job when her company goes bankrupt and her house goes up in flames.

Whew! What on earth has happened? Well, the Dark Lady came when she was called and proceeded to strip the veil of illusion and pretense from this woman's affairs. Her husband had been a thieving, philandering jerk all along. But since he was handsome and socially adept, she had chosen not to see it, just as she had never looked hard beneath her children's successful facades in order to see how unhappy they were. Nor had she bothered to question why her company had been giving such enormous bonuses and large expense accounts while sales had been down. And her gardener had warned her years ago about the fire hazard of her wood-shingle roof.

Before you cry "unfair," and protest that this poor woman is being "punished" for other people's "bad" behavior, let me point out that none of the unpleasant consequences is actually happening to the woman herself. She is being "punished," if you will, only to the extent that she has profited by letting the problem situations continue. Perhaps she had discovered her husband's affair, or his tax evasion but decided to pretend otherwise because a divorce would be too expensive and inconvenient. Perhaps she was always too busy pursuing her career to pay attention to her children when they were little. And wood-shingles are far more fashionable and contribute more to the resale value of a house than dreary asphalt tile.

None of these actions or avoidance of actions was necessarily bad or good in and of themselves. Another woman might be able to have all of these things without the problems. But this particular woman, who valued external appearances over substance, had called upon the Dark Lady of Wisdom, an action with far-reaching consequences. In order for her to begin her spiritual journey, all the pretense had to vanish before she could see what was really there and what wasn't. Like Santa Claus, the Dark Lady knows the karmic record of each of us and balances the books with infinite accuracy. It's not nice to fool Mother Nature.

No wonder the temple of the Dark Goddess is small and unthronged. Who wants to put themselves through that kind of agony? Wouldn't anyone prefer the Fairy Gold at the end of the rainbow to plain old copper pennies that one earns by honest labor? Sure. The problem is that Fairy Gold has a nasty habit of turning back into dead leaves at the precise moment that the landlord comes for

his rent. At least, copper pennies can serve as some sort of payment if you have earned enough of them.

Eventually there comes a time in a soul's development when it wearies of the empty fantasy. Illusion, no matter how pretty and compelling, doesn't satisfy the soul's inner longings forever. It grows tired of running around in the wheel, like a hamster in a case, getting no real reward. Sooner or later, the weary soul will tread the overgrown path to the temple of the Dark Mother and stand at the threshold, willing to take its lumps, whatever they are, provided it can finally get a taste of something real. "Mother," it says, "I screwed up. I thought I was one thing, but I really was another. I hated people for doing what I myself did. I expected other people pay for my mistakes. I was too proud to admit that I wasn't as noble and perfect as I thought I was. I made a mess of my world, and I now I want to make it better. Teach me how." To such a soul, the Black Goddess shows compassion. She cuts away at the layers of self delusion and disappointment with the consummate skill of a surgeon until all that remains is the soul's inner reality, bright and squeaky clean. Then, she holds up the mirror of life and shows the soul who it really is.

This is the beginning of wisdom.

Mother Night

In the neverending blackness of the space
Between yesterday and tomorrow
We will find Her
Mother of both the darkness and the dawn.
In the silent, breathless hush
Between the exhale and the inhale
Between the systolic and diastolic
Beats of a heart momentarily at rest
She abides.
Change swirls around her
Shifting patterns of light and dark
Earth and Air, Fire and Water
Good and Evil, Female and Male
Yet, she remains
As the still center of the cyclone
The all-seeing eye of the hurricane
Silent
Unmoving
Timeless
Formless
Nameless



Faceless
Always behind us
Like the dark side of the moon
Like the back of our own heads.
Feet first we enter
Her realm
Until head first we emerge
Bundled into our graves in a fetal
position
Our knees tucked beneath our chins
Awaiting the dawn.
What will we dream in this sleep
between
The death rattle and that gasp that
heralds
A baby's first wail?
Will the melodrama of our life past make
us laugh
Or cry?
Will we try to turn away
When we have no head to turn?
Will we try to shut
Our lidless eyes?
Or will we watch the movie through its
final reel
Alone?
The Hell of the Christians holds no such
anguish.
And yet
Dawn comes.
We gasp, we wail and rejoin the dance
of life
And try not to stumble
Or tread on others' feet.
Set after set
The piper never tires.
We step the figure
Clasping now this hand, and now that
In the traveling measure, the grand hey
First fearful, then graceful
Awaiting the next tune and the next
With tapping toes
And cheerful whistle

Until that day which is not a day
That time which is not a time
In the still of the darkness
between nightfall and daybreak
Between the last breath and the first
When finally we are freed from images
seen only
In the upside-down mirrors
On the rear surfaces of our eyes
We will at last see Her face
And we will find it
Beautiful.



On the Margins: Medea as a case-study for witches

Prinny Miller

The witch Medea occupied a liminal place in the Greco-Roman mind. On one hand, she is a barbarian sorceress whose knowledge of poisonous herbcraft (Lat., ‘venefice’) and magic inspires fear; she kills her own children and murders others out of vengeance. On the other hand, she is a victim of Fate, a spurned woman and a hero who flies away from the scene of her crimes in a fiery chariot. The great playwright, Euripides, valorizes Medea by suggesting that she was duped by Aphrodite into loving an opportunistic cad (Jason) and that her honor demands that she exact revenge upon him and his new bride-to-be. While the Euripidean account forms an interesting narrative, the account generated by Ovid offers an intriguing outline for this witch par excellence.

While describing the witch Medea, Ovid claims that, “she gathers dreaded herbs with a knife,” “[she] wanders through tombs...and collects certain bones from the tepid funeral pyres” and that she strives to “draw down the reluctant moon from its course.”¹ Medea, per Ovid, also has the power to hide the chariot of the Sun, to cast spells with waxen effigies and to hold back the wild waters. If Medea and her phenomenological manipulation is a prototype for a ‘witch’ in the Greco-Roman world, then the Indo-European metanarrative for magical affinities with nature might prove useful in constructing her variant of witchcraft. Essentially, the reader is told that Medea has a degree of power over the natural world and that her magic employs potentially distasteful techniques. The use of bones from funeral pyres is slightly reminiscent, in the modern day, of the prenda/nganga/nkiso in Palo Mayombe or the *kangling* in the Chöd practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

To begin, Medea is a barbarian. For the Greeks, ‘barbaroi’ was a pejorative term to describe any non-Greek. For instance, the Cyclopes in *The Odyssey* are called ‘barbaroi’ because they have spurned the Indo-European rules for guest-host relationships and they eat food (namely, humans) that a Greek would find distasteful. A barbarian, like Medea, can come to Greece through marriage or conquest, but the barbarian stigma remains. As such, Medea is always viewed with suspicion because she is the other – she may or may not play by societal rules or uphold something as nebulous as “Greek values.” In Norse terms, she is always in the *Utangarð* and her witchcraft and barbarian status acts as a barrier between her and other citizens in the *Innangarð*. Furthermore, Ovid describes her as, “wandering the tombs...with unbound hair.” A proper Greek woman would never consent to being seen in public with her hair unbound. Such freedoms are what barbarian and ‘uncivilized’ woman do. As a witch, she can live within society, but will never really be *of* it.

Integral to Medea’s craft is the knowledge and employment of herbs. She uses herbs as sedatives, to heal and to poison. The collected mythology surrounding Medea portrays her as being both lauded and ostracized for her herbcraft and magical ability. She heals Herakles, but is driven out of town by

1 Ovid, *Heroides*, “Hypsipyle Iasoni,” V. 83-90. Translation mine.

frightened locals. Her marriage to Jason ends because his upward mobility is threatened by having a powerful witch for a wife. She helps Jason win the Golden Fleece, but sacrifices her brother in order to escape. For Medea, victory, fame and tragedy work in synergy. Nothing gained comes without a price and, as the saying goes, no kind deed ever goes unpunished.

In summary, the practices and tragedy of Medea can be instructive to modern Crafters. According to the account in Ovid, her magic appears to encompass herbcraft, working with the spirits of the dead and manipulating natural forces. She uses her abilities and knowledge to help her family and to further her own agenda. As such, her magical praxis is not an extension of religious belief (although she is said to be a worshipper of Hekate in the lore) or mysticism. Her practice is active, practical and not beholden to theological or moralistic concerns. However, her practice does place her outside of society and is ultimately alienating. As Peter Paddon notes in “The Road Less Traveled” (*The Crooked Path*, Issue 2), Crafting can lead to the phenomenon of being alone in a crowded room. The despair and “yawning chasm of ‘difference’”² is a reality for most on this Path and it is typified by the duality in Medea – the victory and loss, the heroics and loneliness, the ecstasy and despair. But, as the ancients noted, a gift requires a gift in return and participating in the Sabbat does come at a price. Still, the rejoinder to “The Road Less Travelled” by Robert Frost reminds us that “taking the road less traveled by...makes all the difference.” It is this “difference” that separates the Crafter from the non-Crafter and it is the payment for this “difference” that makes the life of the Crafter meaningful, thrilling and awe-full. Or, to steal a phrase from the late Rudolf Otto, it gives us an immediate sense of the *mysterium tremendum* – the awe-full mystery of life that leads us, in fascination, to the numinous and holy.



2 Peter Paddon, “The Road Less Traveled” in *The Crooked Path*, Volume 2, Summer 2008.

THE SHAMAN

Radomir Ristic

Several years ago, at a banquet, I had the opportunity to meet a very interesting man. This happened a few days after I had received an initiation in shamanism, and he was a guest shaman from abroad. I was lucky enough to sit near him and spend a pleasant evening in conversation with him, mainly about his hunting and fishing trip to Alaska. Several weeks ago I met him again, and decided to do an interview with him for this Journal. His name is Nedeljko Drazic.

His life story is amazing. He was born in Tenja in Croatia, but into a Serbian family from Herzegovina with a 500 year old tradition in the natural healing arts. His grandmother was some kind of priestess and herbalist, and he received his first education from her. He studied classical medicine and also Alternative medicine. His specialty is using bio-energy healing, herbal therapy, homeopathy, crystal healing therapy and parapsychology in general.



Dr. Nedeljko Drazic

He went to England and lived there for a few years. After England, in 1992, he went to America, and settled in Chicago. In America he became rich, but he continued to provide help to others. His clients were senators, managers, baseball players, NBA players and others. To my knowledge he is a good friend with at least one former American president. He has offices in Los Angeles, Chicago and

New York, and beyond America he visited to Russia and received a Ph.D. in Alternative Medicine. In Russia he helped some famous people and received the “Star of hope” medal, first degree, for the development of Alternative Medicine. He received a golden watch From President of Russia Vladimir Putin with his signature. For some time, he lived in Siberia and worked with their shamanistic traditions. From Russia he went to China, to study their systems, and from there he journeyed to Tibet where he stayed to learn from Tibetan lamas for three years. Then he returned to America, and went in South America to explore their shamanism. He has also visited Africa.

Today he lives in America, Dubai and Serbia. In each country he stays for several months. He became a member of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine. This is a society of Physicians and scientists dedicated to enhancing the quality and extending the length of the human life. He is a member of Worldwide Peace Marker Project. His latest achievement is opening a school for “Spiritual Renewal and folk tradition” in Belgrade. The first generation of students is mostly from America.

His system of work is very interesting. During the week people come to him and he examines them with method of Tibetan diagnosis. After that he usually does something like bio-energy healing and prescribes a herbal combination for further healing. He personally makes this mixture from plants from all over the world. If he senses the presence of some entities, curse, magic or something similar, he tells the client to come back. When he has collected a group of such people, he performs a group shamanistic ritual. Its purpose is to banish entities which are in these people, or around them. He told me that entities feed on their energies, causing a lot of trouble in their lives. Usually it affects their immune system, they suffer from insomnia, anxiety, bad luck in general, a lack of concentration etc.

First he would prepare for the ritual. He has one helper who makes rhythmic sounds with two gourds that have shells all around them, which are used as rattles. Then with his wand he makes a magic circle. He uses it to prevent the entities escaping from the circle and finding new hosts. In the center of the circle he places a table. On it he puts four tusks with symbols on them, and in the middle of them something like an odd looking pot, in which he will imprison the banished entities. In the front of the pot is a small opening through which the entities will pass into the pot. Once everything is ready, the people come in.

The people should be inaked, but because that can be difficult for some of them, the solution is that they remove their clothes, and over their nude body they wear some kind of robe. They enter the circle and take each other by the hands. The Shaman tells them a chant, which they should repeat constantly, and they begin to chant. His helper starts with rattles, and the Shaman, with a wand in one hand and a whip made from horse hair in other, starts to approach each person in the circle and recite an incantation. As he told me, this is the moment that he tries to provoke a quarrel among the entities. This makes them fearful and weak until sound of the rattles frightens them. Then he banishes them into the pot through the small opening that attracts them, and they feel that they have escaped and are safe. When they enter the pot they can't get out any other way. At this point, he seals the pot, and the ritual is finished.



Shamanistic ritual

During the ritual some people react very strongly. Some of them scream, some faint, vomit, cry and some even talk in some strange language. Whole thing has a lot resemblance with exorcism. After ritual all people feel good, they handshake with others, kiss others three times in the cheek and hug. All of them have a feeling that they passed some catharsis experience.

Nedeljko Drazic use ritual trance too. As he told me during the night he usually contacts his teachers from all continents and talks with them about a lot of things. Beside that he uses trance to continue a chase of some entities as well and some of them attack him in hope to get revenge. So he is very familiar with night fights. Beside all of that he makes talismans and charms by shamanistic rules. For the end he is author of some books about herbal lore and some articles as well.

Radomir Ristic

RECONSTRUCTION and RECREATION: CREATING a TRADITION FOR the 21st CENTURY

Peter Paddon

There are a lot of choices on offer when looking for a Pagan Tradition these days. Aside from the many different flavors of Wicca (including roll-your-own for the truly eclectic), there are the assorted schools of Druidry, Celtic, Germanic, Kemetic and Hellenic, not to mention the combination platters. It is enough to make a seeker suffer vertigo.

There is also a variety of opinions when it comes to Traditional Witchcraft. Some say that it is another name on the list touched upon above, some say that it is something else entirely, and all claim long and loud that their take on authenticity is the authentic one.

In all the Traditions of Paganism, there are three basic approaches, four if you include the “unbroken lineage for generations” claims of some. They are:

- Reconstruction – this is where every effort is made to create a historically accurate practice, supported by academic reference and historic documentation. For many forms of Pagan practice, this is viable due to the wealth of material, but it becomes more difficult with cultures, like the Celts, who did not write about their practices, leaving adherents reliant upon the accounts of their enemies, such as the Romans. Notable examples of the are Hellenic and Kemetic (Egyptian) Reconstructionists, and Asatru and other Germanic organizations.
- Extrapolation – Followers of this approach adopt the perspective of what their chosen Path would look like today if it had been practiced in an unbroken procession. While they are more flexible than their Reconstructionist brethren, adherents still base their practice in available historical material, supplemented with the results of personal gnosis and experimentation. Most Traditional Witches are likely to subscribe at least partially to this approach.
- Pragmatists – “If it works, use it” could be the battle-cry of those who follow this approach. They will happily make use of the research of the other two approaches, but do not feel bound to use only verifiable material. Everybody does at least a little of this, as neither of the other approaches is flexible enough to survive without a little “we’ll do it this way until we find evidence to support how it was really done”.

The key thing to remember is that most Reconstructionists are not likely to be Traditional Witches, though some try. Reconstructionism is mostly for the Pagan Folk religions as practiced by whole communities, and Witches by their nature tend to live on the fringes of society, with forbidden practices. So while Witchcraft Traditions can be found using all three approaches, it is

better to examine the three types of Tradition specific to the Path of Witchcraft:

- Culture-based – these will often stress the Anglo-Saxon or Germanic origins of the Craft, and are most likely to use a Reconstructionist approach. Priority is given to the Master and the Dame (the God and Goddess of Witchcraft), and these are frequently the only deities referred to, though there are other spirits involved in the Lore and praxis.
- Family-Based – these are tricky. In recent years, the idea of Fam Trad has taken a beating because there is little, if any, evidence of even a single Family Tradition surviving unbroken into modern times. However, there are many examples of family practices or folklore that survives as traditions (with a small “t”) within a family. The provenance is compounded by the fact that such family Traditions would have been affected by the trends of history, picking up middle-eastern material from returning crusaders, ceremonial additions from the occult revival periods and Freemasonry, and even elements of Wicca from Gardner’s early days. There is a tendency within the wider Traditional Witchcraft community to dismiss these elements as proof of fraud, and for a while Family Trads were the favored form of invented Trad, with fake lineage and frequently involving the obligatory initiation from Granny.
- Results-based – this is the way my own group works. Though we have connections with other Traditions that follow all of the above approaches, we favor the ongoing creation and recreation of our Path based on the Lore and other information we receive from direct interaction with our Ancestors, our Gods and other spirits and entities. We are pragmatic because if we try something and it works, we incorporate it, and we do refer to academic study and the experiments of other practitioners as well as our own, and consequently our Path is in a state of eternal flux, as we evolve it based on our experiences within it. Back when Raven was our Mistress, we used to joke that if anyone didn’t like the way the Tradition did things... wait! Now we are in a smaller group, we are more focussed, so while we still have a constant state of evolution, it is following a definite Path that we can all actively participate in.

The jury is out on whether Cunningfolk are Witches or not – they would certainly never have used the term. But by the simplest definition, that they practice folk magick and healing within the framework of their local religion, they can certainly be seen to have much in common with the Witchcraft Traditions that have a historical precedent, such as the Streggha, who practised their Craft within the framework and terminology of the Catholic Church. Certainly there is enough common ground that those who find modern uses of the word Witch can be justified in adopting the term to describe their own practice. I use it myself in preference over the word Witch, only using the latter where I want to avoid drawn-out conversations... others may have no idea what a Witch really is, but they always think they do, and that enough to stop them asking questions.

The biggest question about a Tradition these days is often one of lineage. Some do not accept the validity of a Tradition unless they can verify their lineage. Personally, I could care less

about lineage in my own or anyone else's Tradition. It doesn't matter who taught you, if what they taught was worthless. For me, a person who shows the signs of being connected to their Ancestors, working the Lore and Praxis in a coherent and effective way, and with the marks of initiatory experience in their aura, is worth ten people with a pedigree who couldn't raise a spirit in a distillery. In other words, walking the walk is what really matters.

So what are the building blocks for an effective Tradition? The first is to not be so hasty to call what you do a Tradition. I am the magister of a group myself, and the original members of that group all trained together in a specific Tradition. But we do not practice that Tradition, and are forging a new Path for ourselves. And that is what it is... a Path. Only when our students are initiating students of their own will I even begin to consider it a tradition.

There are certain key things that should be included in a Witchcraft Tradition or Path. Whether you are the custodian of a living Tradition that was passed on to you, or are trying to create a new Path for yourself that may one day become a tradition, there are a few key points that – in my opinion – will mark it as a bona fide Witchcraft Tradition.

The first, and perhaps most important point is the presence of the God and Goddess of Witchcraft. Whether you work with other deities or not is a matter of personal choice and/or religious conviction, but to be a Witch, you need to experience the presence of the Horned Master and the Dame, in one form or another. Whether they are the Witchfather and Witchmother, Old Hornie and Black Annis, the Devil and the Bel Grande Dame Sans Merci, they are a defining part of the Path of Witchery. Even if you don't work with deity at all, they will be present as archetypes or as some other form of entity. And if you are doing it right, they will be real to you, not just symbols.

Almost as important, is the connection to the Ancestors. Witchcraft is all about Ancestral workings, from the mantle of power – or virtue – we receive from those who went before, to the practice of tapping the bone to recover Ancestral Lore, and beyond, the Ancestors are part and parcel of the Witches' Path. Whether they are your own family forebears, or more generally the Ancestors of your Tradition, remember that within the Compass there is no linearity to time, so your Ancestors are those long gone – and those yet to be.

Some would argue that the connection with the Land is not merely as important as the connection with the Ancestors – it is the same thing. The Land we speak of here is the Mythic Landscape that underlies the mundane, and it is fair to say that the connection with the Ancestors often manifests through the Mythic Landscape, in the form of the tales and myths of Gods and heroes that make up the Lore of a Tradition. For some Traditions, the Land takes on an even more important role, such as the Gwyddon of Wales, where their praxis is tied to specific sacred sites in Wales. I have had arguments with some in the US who call themselves Gwyddon, because you cannot be a Gwyddon unless you are on the soil of Wales. These wanna-be Welsh Witches denigrate the very ones they claim kinship with, for being “elitist”, or in other words, for refusing to acknowledge their claims, when

the simple truth is that unless you tend the sacred sites, you are not practicing the Way of the Gwyddon, and cannot call yourself such. To a greater or lesser extent, it is the same with any Tradition, but because Gwyddon is currently a buzzword in the way Fam-Trad used to be, anything that stands in the way of a claim made in ignorance is denounced as “elitism”. I don’t have a problem with describing your Path as Gwyddonic in nature, just don’t call yourself something you have not earned the right to call yourself.

While we are on the subject, let’s divert slightly and talk about cultural theft. There are some Traditions that believe in a finite quantity of “juju” held by their Tradition, and they are wary of sharing it with outsiders for that reason. But for most Traditions, there is no limit to the magickal essence in their Tradition, so I am not fond of those who say that a white man cannot learn the ways of the red man, for example. Certain people are getting up in arms over the use of the term shaman in this context, and if they had their way, we would not be allowed to follow any path other than that indigenous to the land our ancestors came from. Unfortunately for their perspective, very few practices are unique to one culture. I agree wholeheartedly with not assuming a role or title that you have not earned honorably, such as Gwyddon, or Apache Medicine Man. But terms like Shaman – and Witch, for that manner – have become public domain, and can be used to describe a type of Path rather than a specific cultural Tradition. Likewise, when the PC crowd decry the neoPagan use of drums and chants as “stealing from Native Americans”, they slip into total fantasy, because guess what... my Welsh ancestors used drumming and chanting too, and vision quests taken while wrapped in a white bull’s hide. The drums even looked the same – I use a buffalo drum instead of a bodhran myself, because I like the tone of the one I have, but I play it like a Celt, not like a Cherokee.

Getting back on-topic, the connection with the Land is expressed through reverence for the Land, but don’t confuse this with being an environmentalist. I’m all in favor of conserving nature and its resources, but you do not have to be an eco-warrior to be a Witch, no matter what many opinionated Tenn Wiccans will insist. Our ancestors were as capable of ruining their environment as we are, we just have better tools for it. I’m not saying we should ignore Global Warming, etc., I’m just saying it doesn’t come automatically attached to your shiny new Witch Hat. Reverence for the Land means being aware of the spirits resident in it, the local guardians and entities, regardless of the cultural setting your own practices make use of. In a podcast last year, I shared the results of connecting with my Welsh Ancestors while in different places around the world. The general consensus was that local guardians and ancestors will watch and not interfere, as long as you acknowledge their presence and remain respectful. To do otherwise would result in less than perfect results, as I am sure that your own Ancestors would join in the nbeat-down you would find yourself on the receiving end of!

The next key point is one that seems hardest for students to grasp, and that is perhaps just as it should be. The language of the Gods is written in poetry and paradox. People used to the literal interpretation given to the Bible by most Christian denominations find it hard to

make sense of myths that contradict each other, and the older the culture, the more evident these contradictions are. It is easiest to see in the tales of the Gods of Ancient Egypt, where deities are married to different spouses in different locations, and one temple may cast a character as the baddie while in other temples he is the hero. A prime example is Set, who is reviled in certain stories as the murderer of his brother Osiris, and yet he was one of the most popular deities with the kings of Egypt and was, in fact, guardian of the Throne alongside Horus for most of Egypt's history. We can thank the Greeks for turning Myth into Ritual Drama, and in the process evolving Lore into Cosmic Soap Opera. All of the Myths originally had the main purpose of exposing the student to Lore that taught them about the nature of the deity concerned, frequently layered in multiple levels of meaning and gnosis. The stories contradicted each other because they were not meant to be "a day in the life of a God", but more like the parables that Jesus told his disciples (oh the irony of writing that statement!). And sometimes the contradiction was deliberate.

A popular phrase in the world of Traditional Witchcraft is "by a bent line, by a straight line, by a crooked line", which among many meanings is a description of the Hex Star and the place where "three roads meet and three roads part". Another saying often quoted is "truth lies betwixt the horns", and they all refer to the Craft technique of resolving or using paradox – truth lies at the point where two apparently irreconcilable opposites can both be said to be true. We see this time and time again in stories like that of Goda, said to be "neither black nor white, neither clothed nor naked, neither mounted nor on foot". It does not refer to a half-and-half scenario, like so many online gurus proclaim, but that she partakes fully of both opposites. It is interesting that this particular storytelling technique even finds its way into the New Testament – Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an ass is frequently shown in older illustrations riding an animal so small that one of Jesus' feet drags on the ground, so he is neither riding nor walking. Baphomet, with the flaming torch between the horns on his brow, is a graphical representation of the magical power of the paradox.

It won't be talked about specifically in public forums, but if you listen carefully, you will notice that Witches like to refer to the larger body of Lore that their Tradition or Path is part of as the Current. Even Ceremonial Magicians do this, as in the 93 current for Thelemites. For the Traditional Witch, however, this use of the term "current" refers to the "River of Blood" that you must immerse yourself in to become one with the Tradition. Now this gory image is a reference to the Witchblood, or the blood ties of Ancestry, and it can also be described as the "Bone Ladder", blood and bone being references to various aspects of our ancestral inheritance, from the days before we had the luxury of genetic terminology to strip away the mystery. In public, initiates may refer to their practice as being part of a "Dragon Tradition", or a "Cauldron Tradition", and so on. In private, the Current may be named for a particular deity or entity – a Cauldron Tradition could be part of the Current of Cerridwen, or of Bran, or of the Dagda, for example. The River of Blood, seldom spoken of, is akin to the Celestial Nile as used by the initiates of the Temples of Ancient Egypt, and there is a Great Mystery associated with it, which once grasped, opens up a whole new way of interacting with the Ancestors, Deities and Lore of the Tradition. I mention it because, though I cannot

share it – each seeker must come to know it for themselves – it is, as so many things are, hidden in plain sight (not in this article, I might add), so each of us is capable of discovering it for ourselves and really bringing our Path to life.

An integral part of the Current is the Call. Like the siren mermaids of old sailors' tales, it is the irresistible song of the Ancestors that calls us to our Fate. It is said that many are called, but few are chosen. But for the traditional Witch, the Call is one that we cannot refuse, for it resonates in our blood, our bones our very being, and there is no denying it except through insanity, and perhaps not even then. A true Witch does not choose their Path, they walk the Path that is fated for them, and yet the goal of the Witch is to cheat Fate, but that is a subject for another time.

As I wrote at the beginning, as far as I am concerned, lineage is not all it is trumped up to be. We talk about the red thread as the bloodline of lineage, but all threads start out white, and are made red by the generations of initiates connected to the thread. In my Path, we consider a true Tradition, or red thread, to start when the founder's students initiate students of their own. Until then, the thread is white, and is more about discovery and tapping the bone than it is about passing on a legacy. If we are lucky, we will one day see our thread turn red, and survive the transition without the Lore becoming bogged down and dogmatic. But for now, our Path is merely a Path, and we concern ourselves with building up our Lore and Practice, growing and learning together. That, for me, is the best mark of a Path or Tradition, that those who walk it do so in harmony, growing and learning together. Whatever they call it, or think of it, if they can do that, they are doing far better than 90% of the "Trads" out there.





The Goddess Hecate, by Cherrie Button, cherrieb.redbubble.com

The Feel of Steel

Ann Finnin

What, on earth, is this Roebuck obsession with swords and daggers all about?

After all, Wicca 101 teaches us that we are supposed to go into circle in perfect love and perfect trust. So, why does the Roebuck insist on going into their circles armed as though they were re-fighting the Battle of Bannockburn? Some have not only one blade but often two, a sword and a dagger. And the women are just as well armed (in some cases, better armed) as the men. It is another distinctive thing about us that a visitor notices, often with trepidation.

Still, it never fails. No matter how pacifistic newcomers to our circle are, sooner or later they start looking around for a proper athame. Even if the choice is a single edged hunting knife rather than a dagger, it must be a real blade, thank you very much, not a Toledo wall hanger, letter opener or crystal wand. In short, it must be an actual tool and/or weapon which could be used as such, even if such a use is never called for.

Why?

Now, I'll grant you that many of our rituals call for a blade and everyone has to have at least a small knife for those rituals. But swords? Back in the bad ol' days, it was illegal, as well as prohibitively expensive, for a peasant or townsman to own a sword. A gathering of witches in the back country of the British Isles might have one sword between all of them, carefully hidden and guarded, wielded by the Magister or Maid in the ritual and not displayed any other time.

However, in an ancient Celtic clan, everyone (and I do mean, *everyone*. Women served in the military until the 5th century A.D.) was expected to be armed at all times, and circle was no exception. While we did not plan this, the less we functioned as a coven and the more we became a clan, the more we all were drawn to acquire cutlery.

Aside from historical precedent, there are significant magical reasons why everyone in the circle should wear, and wield, a real blade of some sort. As far back as we can trace, the Western magical tradition held that the dagger or sword is a symbol of magical power. Ideally, it should have two edges to symbolize that the same power can be used to kill or heal, depending upon the motivation of the person wielding it. And the best symbol of a sharp knife, they say, is a sharp knife.

All that aside, many covens and magical lodges shy away from actual weapons and use an implement that may look like a sword or dagger but is not. Very often, such people will choose to pay enormous amounts of money for something very ornate and elaborate but totally useless rather than pay the same amount, or less, for something that is less fancy but could actually be used. Such people, when confronted with those who object to such things, can always say that it's really okay, the weapon isn't real. Sadly, this usually means that their magic isn't real, either.

It is also inherently dishonest. If a magical group is, indeed, pacifistic (and many are), then they should reasonably eschew *all* forms of weaponry, even the semblance of same. The gods are not fooled, even though spectators and participants may be. If a magician wields something that is intended to be a sword, even if it isn't, then he (or she) will be taken at his word. If his weapon (ditto his magical power) doesn't work as advertised, then disaster might result. It would be a little like going into the midst of a gang war carrying a water pistol. The participants will naturally assume you have a real gun and will try to shoot you. In order to survive, you must either go in properly armed (an AK-47 should do nicely) or stay far, far away.

The members of the Roebuck have, for the most part, not fallen into this trap. All of our blades, even those inexpensive and modest ones, are real and can, if necessary, be used for their intended purpose. This is because the blade we wield in circle is not merely a symbol of power. It constitutes a *physical manifestation* of that power. Consequently, wielding it takes on a whole new dimension.

There is a dictum in occult science that quite accurately states that what occurs on the inner planes (the astral, if you will) manifests on the outer or physical planes, i.e., as above, so below. The dagger becomes an extension of our astral will for good or evil and by bringing this will down to the physical level we complete the cycle. It carries with it actual power, and actual responsibility, that a letter opener that looks like a dagger or a wall ornament that looks like a sword simply does not have.

A real sword or dagger, no matter how small, when properly sharpened for its intended use can do real physical damage if mishandled. Therefore, anyone who wishes to wield one must learn how to treat it with the respect that is due such a potentially dangerous instrument. Nicking one's fingers on one's own blade can teach this lesson far better than hours and hours of lectures on the misuse of magical power.

Most of you have attended one of our Summer Solstice rituals in which the man who is the reigning year king is ritually slain by the man who is next in line of initiatory succession. The two men are given free rein to perform whatever ritual they wish as long as they accomplish this purpose. However, the weapons they use, even if they are nothing but quarter staves must be real, not fake. This tradition began with the first time we did this ritual, some nine years ago. The reigning king, in this case, was the Magister himself. The next in line was the Summoner. Originally, the plan was for the summoner to use a rubber knife. However, at the last minute, for reasons we did not understand at the time, the summoner decided to use his sharp damascus athame instead. As the ritual progressed and the power he was channeling took hold, he took a swipe at the Magister's chest. The tip of the blade caught on the chain on which the Magister's deer tag was hanging. Still, the blade cut his skin deeply enough so that a couple of drops of blood were shed. Only a couple, but that was enough. The year king spilled his blood onto the land and the ritual purpose was accomplished.

Were we just a tad nervous? You bet we were -- to the point where we now take considerable pains to avoid any more such accidents. But we still use real weapons, not fake ones. And it taught us a valuable lesson. If we wished to wield real magical power, not just parade about with elaborate props

as though we were in some kind of theatrical performance, we had to learn how to use that power properly.

Hence, the objection that many people have to weapons in the circle. And, let's face it, their objections have some validity. Weapons in a circle are dangerous, both physically and magically. Innocent people can get hurt in a variety of ways. Accidents can happen when blades are wielded carelessly. Weapons can also be a temptation for people with unresolved hostility and uncontrolled anger to "get back at" some real or imagined adversary. Children, if any, can get in the way of even a responsibly wielded blade and get cut.

Taken to extremes this attitude would dictate that it is better to have no power at all than to risk having someone get hurt. Maybe so, if it is a worship or celebratory rite with a number of untrained people and small children in the circle. However, there is also the argument that there should be pabulum for babes and meat for strong men (and strong women too, I might add). In a circle dedicated to raising power for an important purpose, a major healing for example, weapons and the power they bring with them are not only desirable but necessary. You can't cut out a cancer with a dull scalpel.

People who wish to do magic (as opposed to ritual) need to understand going in that there will always be (not *might* be, *will* be) some sort of backlash from it. The question becomes not how can we avoid the backlash, but is it worth the result we wish to accomplish. If the result is deemed worthy, we can only fire off our charge and brace ourselves for the recoil. The idea that if the magic is "good" then it won't produce any ill effects doesn't wash. *Any* magic, if it is strong enough to have some result of good or ill, is going to have an effect, even if it is nothing more than acute exhaustion.

It is then up to whomever is running the circle to make sure that those attending such a ritual are adults as well as trained initiates. Participants will enter the circle knowing ahead of time that if they don't use their blades, and their power, in a responsible manner someone might get hurt. Theirs is the choice and theirs is the risk. The question for each potential member of the circle is whether or not the risk is worth the result. Only then, can each decide to participate or not. But those who decide to participate must take their lumps and will have no one to blame but themselves if things go awry.

There are circle leaders who attempt to eliminate all elements of risk from the magical workings of their group. They do so with the best of intentions. Usually, they are genuinely caring people who cannot stand to see anyone unhappy or hurt. And so, like an overanxious mother, they will surround their people with a cocoon of safety and security, leaving them totally unable to cope with the harsh realities of life. Such people are automatically suspicious of anyone who even wishes to own a weapon, claiming that a weapon has no other purpose other than to hurt somebody. This *is*, strictly speaking, true (however loudly one may protest that one's knife is only used for digging the wicks out of candles).

However, there are occasionally valid reasons to hurt others, primarily if it prevents them from hurting either you or someone you care about. Everyone agrees that it is morally wrong to attack someone. But is it moral and ethical to allow yourself or someone dependent upon you, such as a child, to come to harm because you find it unacceptable to defend yourself if doing so causes hurt to the attacker? How many women allow themselves to be raped because a kick to the balls or finger in the eyes might hurt the rapist?

This confronts the problem of admitting to ourselves that there is something that we need to be protected from in the first place. The sad fact is that there are predators out there, both human and non-human, that would like nothing better than to find an unprotected person, on either the physical or astral planes, and feed on them. To avoid being a victim, we need to have an effective defense. We either show our teeth and claws or we trick or fool the potential attacker into leaving us alone. Mother Nature in Her infinite variety, has creatures that do both. The ones with the best defense survive, the weak become food for the predator. This is the way nature works, whether humans think it's "right" or not. And, since magical power is a natural force, we have to, in many cases, put aside our human considerations and deal with it as such.

Where, then, do we draw the line between protection and aggression? This is where things get sticky -- especially in so-called Psychic Attack cases. Most people who launch psychic attacks against others do not consider themselves aggressors. No one wants to believe that they are really nasty people who want to beat up magically on some innocent party. So, what usually happens is that they conjure up an illusion that the other party is attacking them and all they are doing is defending themselves. In magical workings where there is a distinctive lack of any physical evidence, there seems to be no limit to the "attacks" that can be imagined as coming from the other party.

There are also a number of people in the magical community who feel as though they have some kind of mandate to launch an attack on an innocent party because they think he or she is doing "evil" and that they must save innocent people from him or her. There have been, over the years, a number of attacks that have supposedly been launched against us with the justification that we were "dangerous" people and that innocent people needed to be "protected" from us. When stripped of the Crusader trappings, these folks are revealed as control freaks who wish only to foist their own personal agendas on others, by force if necessary.

You will, I'm sure, have noticed that I have steered away from the subject of blades and have begun to address the issue of power. That is because when we are speaking of using blades in a circle, we are actually speaking of magical power. Most of the people who object to blades in the circle are, in actual fact, objecting to the power they carry, not necessarily to the blades themselves. Those circles such as ours who openly wield (and, let's be honest, *flaunt*) their blades are advertising to the community that they wield power and are not ashamed of it. Again, there are people who will automatically assume that a person who is not afraid to wield his or her own power is, *de facto*, an aggressor and that it is their duty to protect "innocent" people from him or her. People who own their own power are not easily controlled, and those who feel a mandate to control others are naturally suspicious of them.

As Roebuck members learn to deal with their personal power, the more they will accumulate their arsenals. Is it possible to have too much? Are we collecting weapon after weapon to make up for the fact that we actually feel powerless against our increasingly domineering society? And how do we deal with the temptation to fabricate an attack situation so that we can actually get to *use* all that nifty stuff?

Good question.

Ultimately, our power comes from the gods and we are at our most powerful when we serve a purpose higher than our own ego gratification. The power, then, is only ours on loan. It can be yanked away from us at any time if we get out of hand, no matter how many swords we own. We can look around and see those who, for all their trappings of power and authority, are nothing but deflated shells once the power that energized them is gone. We can avoid having that happen to us by continually keeping our gaze upon the Dark Lady of Truth, honing our own weapons (our magical wills) and do our best to ignore what other people are doing and saying. That way, when She needs us, we will be ready.





Beltaine, by Cherrie Button, cherrieb.redbubble.com



Celtic Witch, by Cherrie Button, cherrieb.redbubble.com

"de Intorkatura"-Sending back

Radomir Ristic

One of the most famous rituals for returning spells cast upon you, in the east of Serbia, is "De Intorkatura". This authentic and ancient ritual was originally preserved by the Serbian explorer Radovan Kazimirovic, before World War II. This specific ritual has been analyzed many times by ethnologists, mainly because it is the longest text they have of this type, and many interesting things can be found in it. Some of these are how witches use the besom, scourge, willow stick, salt and paprika; how they perceive higher forces and water, which has the status of Goddess (Great Lady) in this particular spell.

However, this specific ritual is in use even today, and every witch, male or female, from east Serbia knows it. The ritual itself is very simple, but witches must know the whole text by heart without reading it from a piece of paper or a notebook.

The ritual has two parts. In the first one, the witch calls the higher forces to help her to heal her client and turn back the evil spell which was sent to him. In this part she invokes God, the Mother and the Sacred Ones. They all are Christian characters, but witches do not think of them in that way. Actually, the God in this text is the creator of the material universe; the Mother is the Forest Mother (Bright one) from Vlachian mythology, and she is identified with God's Mother. the Sacred or Secret Ones are 44 Saints that do not exist in orthodox Christianity. Witches call them in many rituals, but no one knows who they really are, even today.

We shall see that this text is very brutal in some parts but what is interesting for us is that in it, it is very often mentioned that what the witch is doing is not a sin, because the other one started first. This tells us something about magical morals in this part of Europe.

After that follows a small ritual with the goal of empowering water, which will be used by the client to "wash" the spell from his body. During this ritual the witch intones the second part of the text and asks for help from the Great Lady-water. The Great Lady is the Water Goddess (Dark one) and she is known as Water Maria.

For this ritual the witch must have:

One gourd,

One cup of "virgin" water (that is water from a well, a mountain river, or some other place in nature. The water should be clean and not used for any other purpose),

Black handed knife (the magic knife known as "kustura"),

One small bouquet of sweet basil, which should be tied with red thread (this plant and red thread are in use constantly in Balkan witchcraft. Together they are practically a magic tool which has the purpose of banishing all evil, including illness, evil spells, evil demons etc.)

The incantation is as follows:

Amen, amen o my spell and God spell!

Spell from me and cure, spell from you, from you God, from you Mother and from all sacred ones.

To remember, with mercy to see him and bring to "ill" (name) a cure.

To recover and heal him from:

Any diseases, spells, curses, any "intention" from the witch which sent him this spell.

The witch has moved, with her mouth she has talked, with her leg she has stepped, with her arm she has pitched.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back with both.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back triple.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back four times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back five times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back six times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back seven times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back eight times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back nine times.

She has given with one hand, I'm turning back ten times.

Because I'm making belt like bread and turning back spells to head of she who spells has sent, because it is not a sin, because she asked for it, she deserved that, because she has sent spells, without salt, without paper, without top, without jam, I am sending it back with top and jammed; with salt salted, with paprika spiced, with besom cleaned, with blossom willow stick and fire scourge repelled to the witch who has made this spell, because it is not a sin, she deserves it.

If witch is alive let this spell go by road into her yard,

From the yard to the house,

From the house to the table,

From the table into the dish,

From the dish into the spoon,

From the spoon into her mouth,

From her mouth into her stomach,

Until she becomes mad and in the fire settled,

Until she becomes like a broken besom,

A besom which people throw into the garbage,

From dogs pissed,

From people cursed and hated,

Let no one dsee her,

From God is she cursed.

*If witch is dead let this spell go to her in her grave,
Let it pass beside the cross, to her in her bones.*

After that, the witch would take a gourd, fill it with “virgin” water, and she would “cut” the water three times in the shape of cross with her black-handled knife. After this was done, she would take a bouquet of Sweet basil, put it in the water and start to whisk it. While she was doing that, she would recite the following:

*Great water, great Lady!
Like you know how to wash every dirt shirt,
How you wash mud from every stone,
Like that, as you know, clean and refine (name),
From every illness, spells and trouble.
A Witch has put a spell on him and bound him; I have turned back the spell and unbound him.
A Witch has put a spell on him and buried it; I have dug up and turned back a spell.
A Witch has put a spell on him and closed it; I have opened it and turned back a spell.
A Witch has cast a spell; I have turned it back and turned it down.
A Witch has put a spell on the threshing floor and with horse jammed; I have released it with a shovel,
with God's help.
I have bound her spell, put it in saddle bags, on a charged horse; I have sent the horse from road to road,
from curb to curb, from town to town, to go and find the witch, with heel to hit her, on the ground to bear
down her and with ground to collate her.
Because it is not a sin for me, because she asked for it and she deserved that.*

After that she would take water from the gourd, put it in a dish and give it to her client. For some period he should wash his face with that water, every morning. In most cases that would be one week.

Radomir Ristic

The Objective Astral

Ann Finnin

In order to explore why magic works (and why it sometimes doesn't), we need to introduce the concept of the Objective Astral. This very real realm (just as the physical realm is real) is the repository of all the images of humanity's hopes and fears, as reflected in stories, art, music and other creative works, ever since humans were human. In the (Xth) century, the Greek philosopher Plato postulated a realm of humanity's ideals which often can manifest on the physical but always in an imperfect form since perfection, that is, a full reflection of the ideal, is impossible in the physical realm.

Consequently, somewhere in this Platonic world of ideals is the ideal chair, comprised of all the things that a chair should be, of which the various physical manifestation of this ideal are pale reflections. Also included in this realm are other ideals, more primal, that of the ideal mother and child, for example, or the ideal warrior, or king which human beings strive to pattern themselves after with varying degrees of success. The reason it is called the 'objective' astral, is that all people can agree as to its contents. It is not just a reflection of one person's fantasy images, or even a small group's images (as opposed to the group mind which is another phenomenon altogether). When an image emerges from the Objective Astral, everyone who is human (presumably) can recognize it and react to it in a predictable manner.

Some clever people by now have noticed the similarity between this concept and that of the Collective Unconscious. Dr. Jung was well familiar with the work of Plato. He took the concept of the Platonic ideal and expanded upon it and, using humanity's myths and legends, defined its parameters and cataloged its contents. Under the heading Divine Mother and Child, for example, he placed the images (and all the attendant legends and lore that accompanies those images) of Virgin Mary and Christ Child, Isis and Horus, and a myriad of others. Similarly, under Semi-Divine Hero we can find Hercules, Cuchulain, Gilgamesh, and a host of others all there in the same astral filing cabinet. We owe Dr. Jung a great debt of gratitude for this monumental task.

So, the Objective Astral is a very real if not physical place since it is a state of mind, like the dream of humanity, that everyone participates in. The difficulty in understanding this concept is the problem most people have with the word 'dream.' To most people, a dream consists of weird and funny images that plague their sleep, which can either please or disturb them and which, if they remember them at all, are forgotten as quickly as possible when they wake up. How many times do we hear someone say "Thank God, it was only a dream," when some disaster happens in their nighttime experience, and then they move on as though nothing has happened. 'Only a dream' means that the experience was not real and therefore not relevant to the dreamer's daily life. After all, they didn't really fall off the cliff, forget the exam, kill the person. So, they heave a great sigh of relief that they don't have to face the consequences of those actions on the physical and get on with their daily lives.

The Jungian school of psychology teaches us that dreams are the way in which the unconscious mind communicates to the conscious mind the problems it perceives with the way a person is living their

life. It communicates in fearful and disturbing dreams, using images specially designed to get the person's attention, the more frightening the dream, the more serious the problem. In other times, places and cultures, a nightmare of death and dismemberment would send the dreamer running to the nearest oracle, priest or rabbi who would interpret or translate the dream from its archtypical images to conscious logic and tell the dreamer what is being said.

In our culture, we are encouraged to ignore such warnings. Since the frightening dream image didn't happen on the physical, it is disregarded – after all, the physical realm is the only reality worth bothering about. The reality of feelings and emotions is ignored. True, we didn't fall off the cliff. But, something else just as devastating in our emotional life is about to happen if we aren't careful. And emotions have a nasty habit of turning into physical situations, and therefore, impossible to ignore any further. Just as personal dreams can result changes in the physical world of the individual, so the dreams of a culture cause changes in the physical world of a society. We get what we want, both as individuals and as a society, if we want it badly enough. What we want is reflected in our art and literature, which in turn, is manifested in our society. And this 'we' that brings about such changes in the physical world is the Collective Unconscious.

Many people (including some psychologists who should know better) make an erroneous assumption about the Collective Unconscious. They view it as a kind of dusty attic where old stuff left over from humanity's superstitious past, is stashed – interesting to look at and theorize about but totally irrelevant to our modern, scientific culture. Many artists and writers consider it a sort of library that they can consult if they want to look up an image or archetype to use in a story, piece of graphic art or musical composition. And, it is that, of course. But most people fail to consider that the Collective Unconscious is also a living force, the unconscious mind of humanity. And even though it's not rational or logical the way we think of a conscious mind, it is aware, intelligent, logical in its own way and extremely pragmatic.

Like the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious is communicated with not in words, but pictures and symbols. If one takes the time and trouble to learn the language, it can be talked with easily. Places can be visited, beings can be consulted and the information thus garnered can be brought back to waking consciousness on an ongoing basis. This is the Shaman's journey, to travel through the dream of humanity by conscious will for a specific purpose and bring back something for everyone else. And, like the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious can be influenced by the will of an individual who wishes something to happen on the physical realm. However, it must be appealed to on the emotional level rather than persuaded by rational argument because it responds to feelings rather than logic. If it is sufficiently moved by an emotional appeal, presented in the symbolic language that it understands, it will motivate the collective which comprises it into action, which will eventually be seen on the physical realm.

An appeal is made to the Collective Unconscious by the individual magician, witch, shaman or priest for an emotional purpose. The appeal is presented by concrete symbols communicating what is wanted – not 'a healing for Mary' but Mary's breast cancer cured so that she can be with her three children so they won't be motherless. Mary's picture, perhaps with her children also pictured,

is placed on a sacred space, altar or circle. Some deity is invoked, prayed to, or, in some cases, commanded to accomplish the purpose. The magician will visualize in his or her mind the desired action (the tumor shrinking and disappearing) or the desired outcome (Mary happily playing with her children) perhaps with some ritual gesture designed to symbolize the desired action (something symbolizing Mary's cancer being burned in a fire, for example). The magician will then 'fix' the spell by declaring it done and end the ritual.

It doesn't matter if anyone else witnesses this ritual. The purpose of it is to fill the magician's mind with the desired action (Mary being rid of the cancer) and his or her heart with the desired emotion (compassion for Mary). After all, the magician himself or herself is part of the Collective Unconscious and therefore has a direct line to it. The magician's personal unconscious, therefore, becomes the messenger which delivers the appeal. If the emotional appeal of the request is strong enough, the collective unconscious will also desire to heal Mary and vast and powerful forces will be set into motion to accomplish that purpose on the physical. Certain 'coincidences' (what Dr. Jung called 'synchronicity') will happen, seemingly out of the blue. Mary will, for example, 'just happen' to meet a person who knows just the right doctor or surgeon who is an expert on her particular form of cancer. She will 'just happen' to find a means of funding for necessary treatment or someone who will look after her children for her. Finally, if Mary herself is aware of what is being done on her behalf and is participating in it on an emotional level (i.e. believing in its ability to work), she might well be spontaneously healed of the cancer altogether.

This is called 'Magic' by the unenlightened. It's also why so many personal magical rituals fall on their keester. An individual, motivated by individual (usually selfish) motives, appeals to the collective unconscious with a request (or worse, a demand) for money, power, sexual favors, fame or some such. The collective unconscious is extremely pragmatic. Even if a person can get its attention, the answer usually is: Why should We go through all this trouble just so you can have something you don't deserve. If you did deserve it, you would demonstrate it by working for it, (read that, doing something useful for Us). But since you are seeking to gratify your desires at Our expense, We aren't going to give you what you want.

The supplicant does one of two things at this point. Either he or she will do some useful work for what he wants in which case, his effort will alert the collective that he or she really does deserve it, and will attract it to him by the force of his effort. Or, the supplicant will pretend that he has it in order to fool others. In extreme cases, this pretending will go into the realm of personal wish fulfillment fantasy in which the supplicant fools himself. At this point, he has passed into the realm of obsession, delusion and madness.

Why is he mad? Because he doesn't really have what he claims to have. How do we know he doesn't? Because it isn't evident on the physical plane. The physical world is called consensual reality for a reason. It is the manifestation of what the collective unconscious thinks should be real and therefore makes real. People have money, fame, sexual favors and such because the collective unconscious moves other people to give it to them. But, it isn't impressed by personal delusions and

rationalizations. It looks past the hype into the heart of the supplicant. If it doesn't like what it sees, it won't play.

Can one person motivate the collective unconscious to gratify his or her personal desires? Yes, provided two things are present. The person's will must be strong enough to have a force all its own and he or she must offer the collective unconscious something it wants in return. This can be either positive, such as a religious and/or spiritual path or the freedom of a people from oppression. But, it can also be negative as well.

A good example of this is what Hitler did in Germany in the 20s and 30s. Germany was a mess. It had just had the snot kicked out of it by the allies during World War I. Now, a charismatic reformer could have stepped in and caused a spiritual awakening in which Germany turned aside from its intention to conquer the rest of the world and devoted itself to resolving its own problems, like Gandhi did in India. But instead, a demagogue came forward and offered the collective unconscious of the German people the following bargain. 'Make me leader and you will be able to say, it's not my fault, everyone was against me. I deserve to have the people of the world give me everything I want.' It was insidious, but it worked. The German people bought into the bargain and made Hitler Fueher. In turn, he gave them pageants, propaganda and hype to allow them to think that Deuchland was indeed uber alles. From this, we see that the collective unconscious is not always kind, wise and benevolent. It can be cruel, self-serving and ambitious. But anyone who wishes to turn that negative force to his or her own purposes must be willing to 'give the devil his due' and give the CU something that it wants in return. If he doesn't deliver, retribution is swift and unerring as it was to Hitler.

In a nutshell, that's the rationale behind magic of all kinds, rituals, spells, etc. By the use of certain recognizable symbols, we petition the collective unconscious to make certain changes in the consensual reality. We can appeal to the CU's better instincts (white magic) or worse instincts (black magic). But the process is the same in both cases. We communicate our desires by sympathetic magic (the use of certain symbols and ritual actions recognized by the CU) by which we call to the CU to do what we want. If we strike a chord of sympathy, then the CU is motivated to action and things start to manifest on the physical plane.

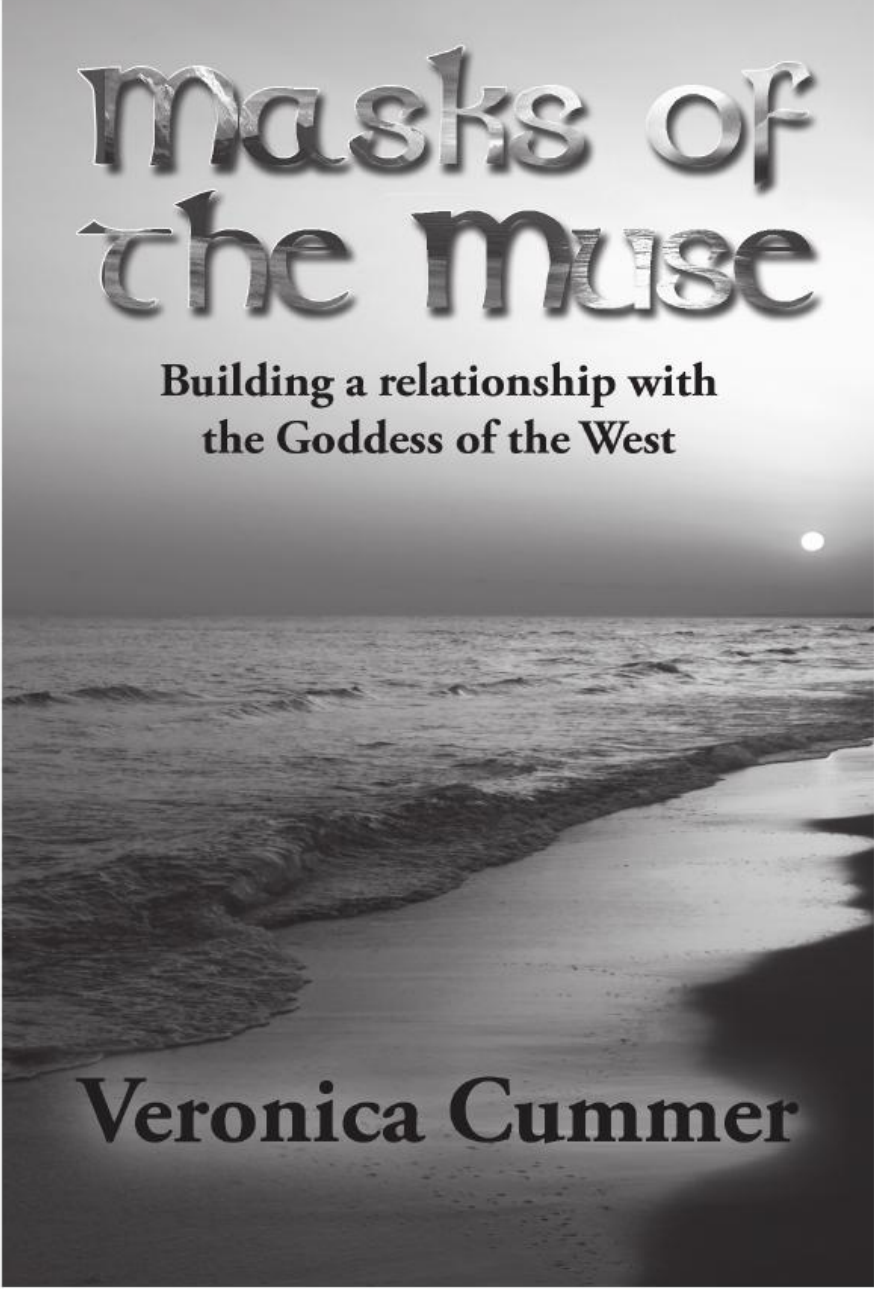
So, how do we make the magic work? By convincing the CU that we are sincere. We do that by actually *being* sincere. If we really are sincere, we will do what we need to do on our end to show our sincerity. We must 'walk the walk' as well as 'talk the talk' and be willing to 'pay the dues.' Sincere, however, doesn't always mean having 'good intentions.' Sincere means that we are willing to put our money (or our time or our effort) where our mouth is. And we can do this for the worst of intentions in the world, as the above example hopefully illustrates. "Be bold," as the saying goes, "And mighty forces come to your aid." But the mighty forces can be those which work for the subjugation of humanity rather than its growth and evolution.

Magic is truly a two-edged sword. The collective unconscious, like a personal unconscious, is both altruistic and predatory. We can court the predatory side of the CU, but we must be prepared to

eventually be the Blue Plate Special for those predatory forces, since it is the fate of all predators to eventually become prey themselves at some point. This is the law of Mother Nature, the Queen of the Collective Unconscious. We fool her at our peril.



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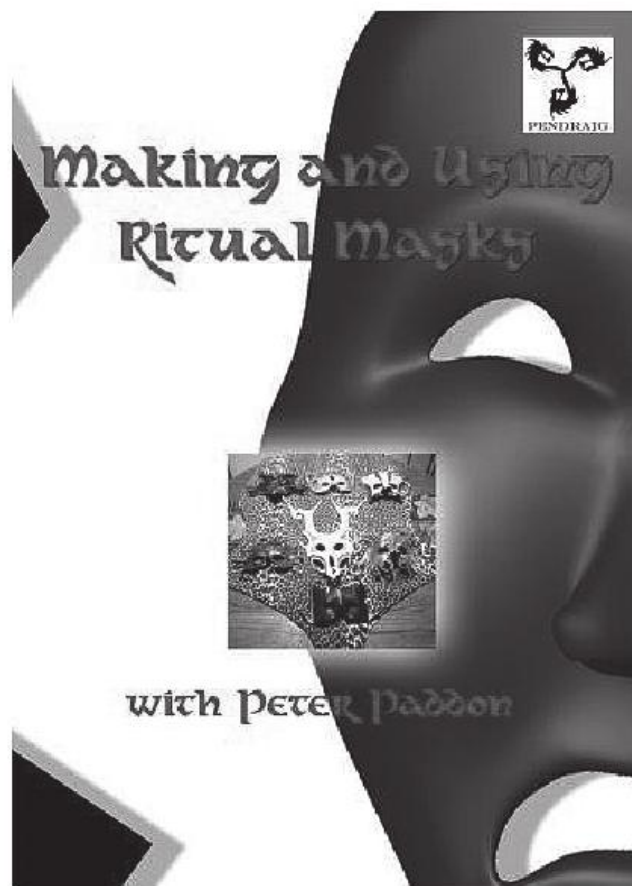
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